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Our Own Journalism Jesus

The Orange County Register owner Aaron Kushner takes his savior schtick to MSNBC

In 2012, Aaron Kushner, a media neophyte and self-described “mission-driven entrepreneur,” purchased *The Orange County Register* and touted himself as a journalistic Jesus, intent

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not only on saving a crappy daily newspaper, but also on dumbfounding veteran American publishers by showing how to revive a struggling industry considered by some experts on the brink of extinction because of the Internet.

During an era of large-scale downsizing of newspapers, Kushner's stated counterintuitive model—give readers more reporting in larger papers to make them want to pay \$260 per year for the product—continues to delight even cynical journalists, many of whom prematurely decided to herald the man who came to Santa Ana from Boston as an unqualified miracle worker.

Despite all the saccharine hype, Kushner's 15-month reign at Grand Avenue demonstrates no point greater than that the 40-year-old businessman with a background in hawking greeting cards is a superb salesman whose ignorance of journalism only seems to fuel his rah-rah enthusiasm.

Earlier this year, Voice of OC reporter Adam Elmahrek uncovered documents showing that Kushner had secretly suggested favorable news coverage to Anaheim officials in exchange for a profit-making business-promotion pact. Even a high-school reporter knows such an arrangement is a horrific, ethical no-no. Kushner, however, didn't profusely apologize or categorize his move as a momentary lapse in judgment. He complained the reporter had no business snooping into the paper's confidential deals.

In mid-August, more news punched holes in Kushner's halo. The paper wasn't meeting its financial goals. Perhaps worse, eight months earlier, his commitment to reporters—a centerpiece of the revival publicity—suffered a blow when he decided to stop matching employee 401(k) contributions, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Individuals, including myself, who want the Reg-

ister to succeed began questioning his belief that he was being innovative by pushing a tired, lame plan to win readers by copying the route used by glossy, content-empty, monthly magazines: publish countless staged, cocktail party-like pictures of local residents.

By Aug. 26, when Kushner visited New York City to appear on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, he must've fretted about getting tough questions. As *Weekly* editor Gustavo Arellano previously revealed in an in-depth profile (“The Pied Piper of Print,” Dec. 14, 2012), Kushner abhors inquiries that can't be answered by carefully calculated talking points. But it was during this six-and-a-half-minute, national television broadcast that Kushner's depictions of himself as the Reg's miracle worker rose to monumental heights of absurdity and provided inadvertent comedy.

While, for example, talking about the importance of keeping his readers informed about poli-

ty's corporate and governmental bosses who want the newspaper to serve as their loyal cheerleader.

Probably because “building community” sounded more like the goal of a real-estate developer or a lame government bureaucrat or a two-faced politician, Brzezinski nudged him to be more precise. Kushner abandoned the first response and took a second stab at an answer. This time, he said selling newspapers is as easy as selling a cup of coffee.

“If you went into Starbucks, and it was a smaller cup with a little less coffee in it, would you pay more or less?” Kushner explained, an explanation repeated verbatim by his business partner, Eric Spitz, and *Register* editor Ken Brusich in numerous other interviews. “You'd pay less. If instead . . . every week you come in, I give you a little bit more coffee in a little bigger cup, over time, you'll pay more for it. That's the simplicity of the [my] model.”

Like the misguided U.S. military policy in Vietnam, the Reg boss is big on

bodies. Nevertheless, month after month, the Reg leader continues to erroneously sell the inflated number because it fits his payroll sales pitch.

Despite the numbers game, Kushner does deserve credit for sparking debate about improving journalism; relaunching the paper's D.C. bureau; strengthening the already-acclaimed investigative Watchdog team; adding a handful of new, competent reporters; making Long Beach a two-daily-paper city; giving attention to high schools; and improving morale. But how to test whether he's consistently giving readers more, uhh, coffee?

Let's compare *Registers*.

On the day before Kushner took control of the paper, it published 12 articles in the local news section. I randomly grabbed the same section of a paper published on the same day of the week after he set up the reader's payroll: July 8. How many local articles were stuffed into the much-ballyhooed new Reg?

Drum roll, please.

The answer is 10, for a net of minus two.

At least on this day, Kushner, who graduated from Stanford in 1994, violated his model. You want to see a truly meaty Reg? Go back to any time in the '90s, when publishing 20 or more articles in the Local section was the norm.

There's also this fact: The paper's superstars today—journalists such as Teri Sforza, Larry Welborn, Jim Hinch, Jonathan Lansner,

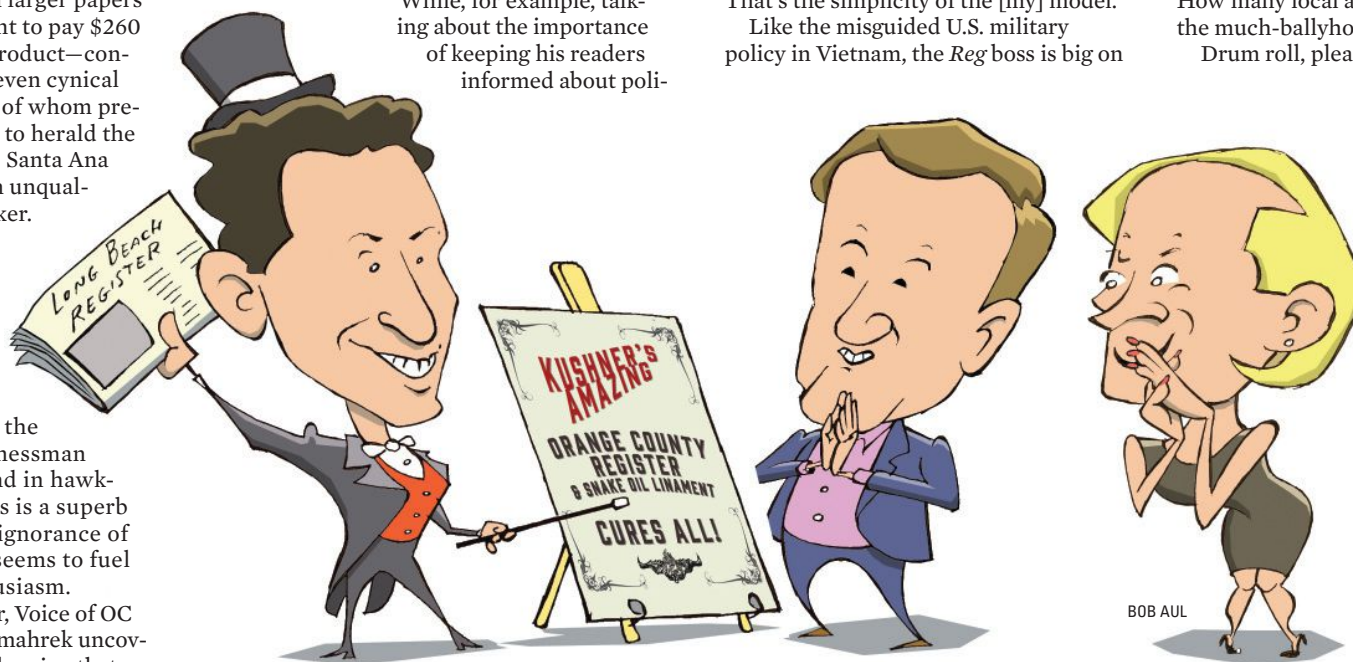
Martin Wisckol, Tony Saavedra, Frank Mickadeit, Jeff Collins, Sean Emery, Pat Brennan, Salvador Hernandez and Steve Fryer—were all at the paper eons before Kushner's arrival.

But at MSNBC, facts didn't get in the way with a coronation of the miracle maker. Except for Huffington Post White House correspondent Sam Stein, the hosts and panelists failed to challenge the Reg boss on a single dubious point. Scarborough even hailed his guest as “amazing.”

“Some people would say I'm crazy, but no, the reality is that when I put more coffee in your coffee cup, you will return,” a satisfied, smiling Kushner reiterated.

“This is amazing!” Scarborough concluded. “This is great news! I love it!”

RSCOTTMOXLEY@OCWEEKLY.COM



tics, Kushner showed he, the self-appointed king of OC news, is a clueless babbler. “We believe that, that, urrr, uh, that our congress people that are in D.C. are doing things that are really important,” he said. “Darrell Issa is from Orange County.”

Obviously, 60 weeks on the job hasn't been long enough for the Reg owner to learn which members of Congress actually live in Orange County. Issa isn't technically one of them. He lives 30 miles south of our border in Vista.

From that gaffe, Kushner turned to giving mind-numbing sound bites. Successfully selling newspapers is really simple, he told hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski. “We happen to believe that building community can, over the long run, be profitable,” explained Kushner in remarks he likes to give to Orange Coun-

meaningless, inflated or outright fabricated body counts. Scarborough almost jumped out of his seat to kiss him when he proudly declared he'd “added over 300 people in the newsroom” in barely more than a year. Kushner is no idiot. He knows most people will believe his assertion means he added 300 reporters and editors, which is, to put it kindly, false.

Our requests for proof of the hiring numbers have been rejected, but veteran insiders say Kushner is exaggerating his figures by pretending all hires—including accountants, ad reps, receptionists, bill collectors, designers, clerks, etc.—are part of the newsroom. Spitz, second in command at the paper, supplied for an April story what are more likely accurate numbers, suggesting Kushner's 300 claim is off by around 180 to 200 newsroom

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DEAR MEXICAN: Can I "ask a Mexican" why El Tri sucks so much? And why a little stadium in Columbus, Ohio, was louder and more passionate than

Estadio Azteca in Mexico City, which seats more than 100,000? Can I also ask why a country that lives and breathes soccer/fútbol always freaks out in Crew Stadium against my beloved U.S.? HAHA! I want to hear this one. Oh, and please don't give me an economic reason because El Tri gets treated better in Mexico than any other organization in that country.

Member of Uncle Chava's Army

DEAR WAB: You're not going to get any *apologías* from me on this one. I've long maintained the current squad for El Tri is overrated and full of themselves, that Chicharito isn't the second coming of Hugo Sanchez or even Cuauhtemoc Blanco, but just an overrated *fresa*, and their since-deposed coach Jose Manuel "Chepo" de la Torre was a disaster (quick aside: Did *ustedes* see the mock poll asking people whether Chepo had harmed Mexico more than notorious narco lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán? God bless our gallows humor!). I do find it funny the United States can only secure a fan base for its soccer squad's games in Podunk towns, that U.S. Soccer rarely stages matches in major cities lest its fan base get overwhelmed by the opposing side's followers, whether said side is Mexico, Poland or Iran. What are you so afraid of, *cabrones*? Let the U.S. play Mexico in the Los Angeles Coliseum—Mexico needs more humiliation, especially in Aztlán, to get its soccer act together, and if that means not qualifying for the World Cup for the first time since 1990, then I'm for it. Oh, and you're mistaken that El Tri is the best-treated organization in Mexico. That would be Televisa, Carlos Slim and the PRI, which are pretty much one and the same cartel.

DEAR MEXICAN: Oye, *mi amor*, I'm not a big music listener, but why do *rockeros*

HATE Maná and call them sellouts and clichéd? They fill arenas around the world and are humanitarians, and their music is reaching a new generation, while their beloved Molotov, Café Tacuba, etc., can't sell out small venues. Is it because those fans themselves sold out and hang out in trendy cafés in Polanco, Los Feliz, Silver Lake and other hipster hangouts? Isn't music supposed to be enjoyed? Not a hater, *pero me vale madre cuando estoy clavado en un bar*.

Latino-Lite for Life

DEAR WAB: I answered the opposite of this question—a *rockero* who wondered why so many Mexicans love the soft-rock titans—so let me *darle* the question this week to Josh Kun, a professor at the University of Southern California, author of the excellent book *Songs in the Key of Los Angeles*, and a pioneer in covering rock *en español* back when it was good. "Part of enjoying music is hating the music you don't enjoy, right?" the good *profe* writes. "For a *rockero*, hating Maná is not really a choice; it's a prerequisite. Maná are *rockero* kryptonite, the ultimate foil. The sell-out scenario doesn't really work with them because Maná never really had underground status. They've long been cologne-doused *fresa* favorites, inoffensive rock for upturned polo collars, rock that didn't shake any foundations or transform any genres or piss anyone off or get anyone arrested. So when they get all the Grammy nods for being rock reps, the tried-and-true *chavos* banda get their outsider values reaffirmed—it's like vanilla winning the best chocolate prize over and over again. Plus, they still sound like the Outfield, and who wants that as a soundtrack for *desmadre*?"

Good job, *profe*! I wish I could guarantee this is the last time we'll discuss Maná in this *columna*, but that's as likely as El Tri winning the World Cup—sigh. . .

ASK THE MEXICAN

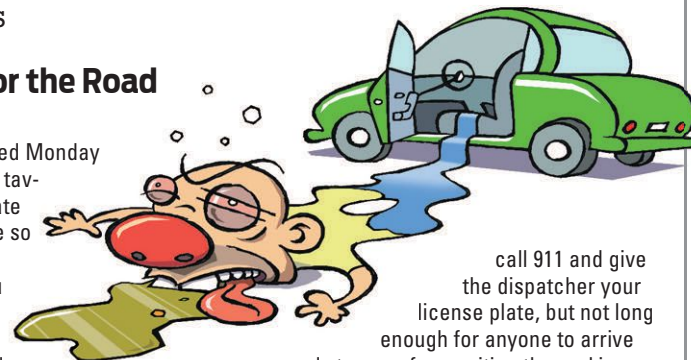
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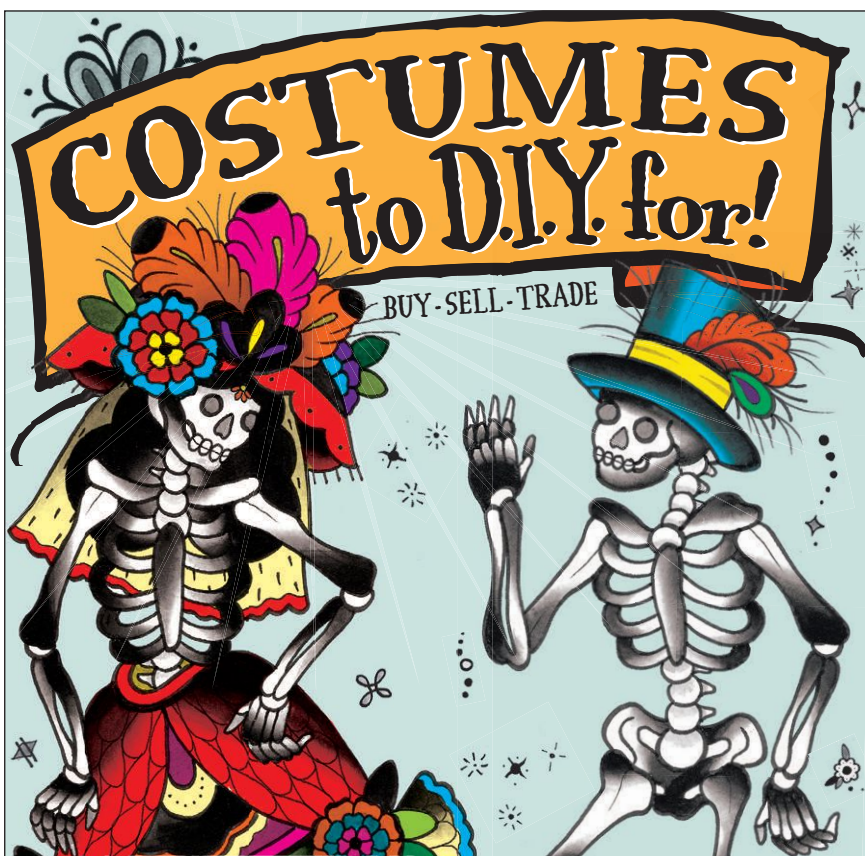
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**"PAT CAN'T COME TO
THE PHONE RIGHT NOW."**

**HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF
AN EXPERIMENT."**

It is so reassuring hearing a receptionist say that. It means someone in America is Doing Something, and so much the better it's Pat Quilter in his Costa Mesa lab, trying to create a widget that wasn't there before. Maybe it's a prototype of his tentatively named Booyaa Bass—a tennis racket-sized, battery-powered thing that can replace your standup bass at a beach party. Maybe he's trying to bring the Cyclops to life: not your cave-dwelling, Greek-chewing variety, but a lightweight race car that previously only existed as a hoax in the 1950s.

More likely, he's fine-tuning his line of Quilter Labs guitar amplifiers, which may just be Orange County's most significant revolution in sound since Leo Fender opened shop in Fullerton more than 60 years ago.

There's plenty of cause to be cynical about nearly everything these days, especially business, with its evil, despoiling, outsourcing, crap-making, profit-maximizing corporations. But this is a story about shoving your cynicism because it gets in the way of seeing that amidst all the venality and banality, some businesses are still doing the stuff that made America great: giving birth to innovative things that are of use, integrity and value to their fellow man; kicking progress up the hill a bit; and making Old Jim happy in the process.

Guitar amplifiers are nothing new; they go back to the 1930s. The current market is ultra-glutted with them, in staggering variety and price points, made by everyone from huge conglomerates with sweatshop Asian factories to boutique builders who use wine-tasting terms such as "bloom" and "bouquet" to describe their pricy wares.

Practically no one thought there was need or

room in the world for another damned guitar amp, yet Quilter's little, greener, hi-tech products are a whole other type of amplification that has picky musicians thrilled.

"I'm usually not that crazy about gear, but I am such a dork for this amp," gushes Bob Morris, guitarist with the Hush Sound. "Once they get over the hump of getting people to believe that a solid-state amp can be this good, I think Quilter will be the amp company. They're mad scientists."

More on "solid-state" later. For now, just know that it is one more hurdle for Quilter because most guitarists are fiercely loyal to amps using antiquated vacuum-tube technology. An increasing number of former tube loyalists and musician's musicians, though, have been switching to Quilters, including Los Lobos' David Hidalgo, Allan Holdsworth, Robert Randolph, Deke Dickerson, Johnny Winter, Matt Hill, Nathan James, Pokey LaFarge and Howard Alden, which leaves several million players yet to snare.

It's only fitting this slow sea change is taking place where the electric guitar and amp first flowered. Before Orange County was ever known for its action-sports industries, reality-TV embarrassments or even its theme parks, it was the electric guitars and amps birthed in Fullerton at Fender Musical Instruments that put us on the map. As author Richard Smith put it in the title to his definitive Fender history, those instruments were "the sound heard 'round the world."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

JOHN GILHOOLEY

PAT QUILTER'S SOUND REVOLUTION

HIS OC COMPANY MAY BE THE BEST THING FOR GUITAR PLAYERS SINCE LEO FENDER
BY JIM WASHBURN



JOHN GILHOOLEY

NOT THE CYCLOPS,
BUT CLOSE

Pat Quilter's Sound Revolution

» FROM PAGE 11

Traveling in Europe back in the '70s, I got to talking with a Yugoslavian guy—"Hey, how do you like living in a communist slave state?" "Screw off, Yankee moron"—and like many folks, he'd never heard of Orange County. I rattled off our more noted city names, all drawing a blank until I got to Fullerton. "Fullerton!" he exulted. "Home of Leo Fender! Stratocaster! Telecaster!"

Talk to most people younger than 60 who grew up behind the Iron Curtain, and you'll know it wasn't MX missiles and Reagan's rhetoric that brought down the wall; it was their generation that grew up longing for Levis and the sound of a Stratocaster. Products matter!

Closer to ground zero, a young Pat Quilter was aware of the revolution Fender's products facilitated, no more palpably than in the early 1960s when he heard the Beach Boys and their Olympic White Fender guitars and blond amps.

"I was achingly dissatisfied with the pabulum that old people were forcing on us on the radio, so that new sound burst like a bombshell on me," Quilter recalls now. "Suddenly, you had these kids making music for kids, with this exciting amplified racket, and still-breaking voices singing in open California harmonies about the stuff we

were doing, like surfing, skateboarding and cars. This can even happen? That sound opened the door to what would become the counterculture revolution of the late '60s, where the kids kind of took over."

Lots of kids bought amps. Quilter built one from scratch in his bedroom in 1967, a hulking 100-watt bass rig with four 12-inch speakers bearing a hand-etched logo reading, "A Quilter Sound Thing." Forty-six years later, that amp's still running.

Quilter was living at home, and home was on the El Toro Marine base, where his dad, Charles Quilter, was a two-star general in charge of the 3rd Marine Air Wing. Pop wasn't home much, since the Vietnam War was raging then. (Pat's older brother Charlie was also in Vietnam as a fighter pilot. His other older brother, Chris, is a writer, who for years has co-penned the Lagunatics' musical-parody revue.)

Pat was born in 1946 in a Navy hospital in Glenview, Illinois. As with a lot of military kids, he got used to moving a lot. "There's a whole syndrome to that," he says. "You learn how to be superficially pleasant enough to make friends quickly, since you need to make new ones every couple of years. I was your classic nerd as a kid, so I got picked on, and every time we'd move, it would be a clean slate and the possibility things would be better."

His younger brother and noted surf musician Matt recalls, "While the rest of us were reading comic books, Pat was reading *Popular Mechanics* and studying the scientific method. He actually devised a logical approach to cleaning our bedroom, dividing it into quadrants to make the work more methodical and efficient, while my approach was, 'How do I get out of doing any of this?'"

There were innumerable good sides to having a nerdy brother. When the little 78 RPM record player broke, Pat, age 7, disassembled and fixed it. When he was around 12, he built a working, gravity-powered roller coaster in the family's rambling back yard, which produced a pleasing "whoopa whoopa whoopa" sound as kids plunged into the unknown.

This was sometime after 1957, when General Quilter was first stationed at El Toro, and the family lived off-base on a sprawling four-lot property in Emerald Bay, with a knotty-pine ranch house, swimming pool and kid-swallowing wilderness area. It was paradise compared to some of the places they had been stationed.

Pat and Matt attended Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, which in those days meant a trip through the countryside and bean fields on two-lane roads, with only a couple of traffic signals to slow things down.

The two did a lot together. "Pat was probably the greatest brother ever," Matt says. "My friends and I were just

a bunch of knuckleheads, but Pat, who was three years older, was always there for us. He was always the smartest kid in the room, and at the time, if you were a little different, you got picked on, and he really didn't have friends his own age. But he was a hero to us. It seemed like he could make or fix anything and could always show us better ways of doing something."

It wasn't until another military move brought the family to Hawaii that Pat began feeling comfortable with his peers. He enrolled at Punahou Academy, one of the top prep schools in the nation (and where Barry Obama attended 15 years later).

"It was my first school where an appreciable segment of the student body were willing to admit they were studying for college, as opposed to just enduring prison for young people," Pat says. "The idea that you could be smart and even relish it was an eye-opener and allowed me to blossom."

He was still a boy apart in many ways. While Pat was enjoying the Beach Boys and Beatles with one ear, he was busy combing thrift shops for 1920s and 1930s jazz records, which he'd come to love as a kid when he heard the music in old cartoons and Laurel and Hardy shorts. So, while everyone else, including Matt, was taking up the electric guitar, Pat hunkered down with a four-string banjo,

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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Pat Quilter's Sound Revolution

» FROM PAGE 12

studying Paul Whiteman 78s.

Physics had been his favorite science course, so he picked that as his college major, "without realizing college physics was way more theoretical and esoteric than the hands-on stuff I was interested in," he recalls. "I shifted to engineering, and it was full of tiresome calculations about girder stress and so forth. Meanwhile, my aunt found a 1920s table radio someone was throwing out. I got it going and figured a way to play my records through it. Then I got interested in making a portable, so I studied transistors and batteries on my own and made an early boom box."

College wasn't half as interesting as he thought it would be, so he dropped out. By then, the Quilter family was living on the base at El Toro. He and his brother had it better than most of the teens there. Some had fathers who were Great Santini types; it was all "yes, sir; no, sir," and they'd make the kids stand at attention as their rooms were inspected.

"I knew a lot of Marine fathers who were classic jarheads, very strict, and politically and philosophically rigid," Pat says. "While my father was a staunch Catholic and thoughtfully conservative, he was always willing to listen to us. I'm sure we were something of a disappointment to him, with our derelictions, drug use and all that, but he never cut us off like a lot of Marine fathers would have, especially the higher-ups where their reputations might be at stake. All the other guys made sure their kids got military crew cuts, while we were running around with long hair. He occasionally got heat for it, but I think he took a secret pride in saying, 'What does it matter if they're not robbing banks?'"

While Vietnam caused schisms at a lot of dinner tables, the general didn't need his kids to tell him about the war. "He was a loyal Marine and servant of the nation, but I don't think he approved of the war, or certainly the conduct of it," Pat says. "He did his tour. When he came back—a broken man is maybe too dramatic a term to use, but his spirits seemed run down, and he retired thereafter."

He credits his dad with his steadiness and respect for skill. From his mom, Liz—better known by the pen name Suzie Q, used as a local newspaper columnist for decades—he got "a love of music, an interest in culture, a desire to have some fun as life goes on. She had a real joy of life and liked to laugh; my father would just wheeze a little."

One 1967 day, the bass player in Matt's rock band complained there was no decent amp around for the \$250 he could afford, so Pat offered to build him one. He'd made several 5- and 10-watt amps by then, "and I figured I'd just use more of everything to make a 100-watt one," he recalls. It wasn't so simple, and by the time he was done, he figures he'd made 3 cents per hour on it. The result was the approximate shape and volume as a hulking Vox Super Beatle, which listed for \$1,195. Unlike most of

those Voxes, the \$250 Quilter No. 1. is still operational and now sits in Quilter Labs' lobby.

Pat tried attending Cal State Long Beach for a while, but come June 1968, it was time to get a summer job. The previous summer, he'd worked as a dishwasher at Laguna Beach's long-gone Gayle Pike's Steakhouse and figured he'd have more fun and money building amps. After all, 20 years earlier, just up Harbor Boulevard, Leo Fender had started making steel guitars and amps in his little radio shop and had become a millionaire.

Pat rented a 20-foot-by-40-foot shop on Costa Mesa's Placentia Avenue, took out a license and a DBA under Quilter Sound Co., and got down to the business of losing money. Some of his amp designs blew up. Others had a high infant-mortality rate, conking out on gigs. He had a little problem with employees.

Matt and his buddies were building the cabinets while Pat wired up the circuitry. It wasn't exactly a production line. "We'd adjourn for lunch, smoke a joint and never come back," Matt says. "We only worked part of the summer before Pat got wise and hired some real people."

Pat eventually took on partners with more business acumen, and the company stayed afloat with investments from his mom and brother Charlie. Even once those bugs were fixed, he knew nothing about marketing. According to Matt, "Pat's business plan was: You make something good and hope somebody stops in to buy it."

It was around 1970 that I first met Pat. I'd seen his gear on stages, including at a mini-rock fest in a cattle field near UC Irvine. Quilter stacks brooded over the stage, and cloudy, suspect apple juice was passed around the crowd. So of course one had to check out his little Costa Mesa workshop, smelling of sawdust and solder, before heading over to the Groove Company on Harbor to buy some psychedelic vinyl. My friends and I thought Pat was one of the coolest things around. A hippie with a business! Making guitar amplifiers!

One day, I lucked onto a Dan Armstrong Plexiglas guitar cheap, but I play left-handed and upside-down and needed a strap peg drilled in the opposite horn. No music store would touch the job—"It'll shatter, kid. You can't drill this stuff." So I took it to Pat. I'd never bought a thing from him and didn't look like I ever could, and guitar repair wasn't his job. But he looked at it, pondered the molecular structure of Plexiglas for a moment and drilled a perfect hole, no charge.

Pat seemed like one together hippie guy to us. He felt otherwise.

"I was kind of fascinated by the hippie culture," he says, "but I have low blood-sugar levels, so I was never the kind of guy who could live on the streets. If I miss a meal, I'm useless. I admired people who lived rough and took things as they came, but the way I'm wired, I needed to have structure around me and an organized, consistent life. I tagged along with that culture, but never to the extent I would have been in a riot or protest."

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I finally managed to buy an amp from him, a two-12-inch combo that sounded fabulous for a solid-state amp.

That "for a solid-state amp" proviso led to Pat becoming the Rip Van Winkle of the guitar-amp biz: When he launched Quilter Labs two years ago, it was after being absent from the business for more than 35 years.

That's because Pat had backed the wrong sonic horse. Guitar amps and most things electronic had run on balky, fragile, glass vacuum tubes since the get-go, until the magic little transistor came along. This was still the space age, when we all assumed new shit was better.

The transistor was small, durable and the wave of the future in everything, it turned out, except in guitar amps. Players complained to Pat that his transistorized amps didn't sound as good as their old tube ones. He wasn't alone: Fender and a lot of other companies made soon-to-be-reviled solid-state product lines. Some companies failed; some still had their tube-powered lines to fall back on.

Pat kept on his transistorized path. He continued studying tube amps, convinced he could re-create their qualities.

Want to be popular at parties? Tell the gang how electric guitars work: The motion of a magnetized guitar

string induces a small alternating current in an adjacent coil of wire at the same wavelength as the string's vibration. In a guitar amp, the pre-amp and power-amp stages boost that signal until it is strong enough to move the amp's speaker, and voila, you get music.

any band, drowned out by horns, banjos and most other instruments. It has been a sweet, noisy revenge, these past 80 years.

Along the way, guitarists discovered they could make their equipment misbehave in ways the manufacturers never intended. Turn a tube amp up until it's

sistor amps were largely immune to that sort of fun, sounding harsh and brittle when overdriven.

Pat's solid-state amps sounded better than most and were used by touring acts such as Honk and Black Pearl, as well as by local hippie wonders including Laguna's Wildfire, while kids in my high school garage band were grateful for his good-sounding, reliable, economic products. The stuff never caught on nationally, though, and the company was a slow-bleeding failure until the mid-'70s when it morphed into QSC Audio.

Pat and his partners gave up on guitar amps and refocused on producing pro sound gear. The company started to become profitable, and by 1984, Pat felt things were running smoothly enough that he took his first real vacation.

"I was sad because I still thought there should be some way of making a good tube-like sound using practical solid-state, and we hadn't quite figured it out. But we needed to move on," he says. "It looked for a while then that synthesizers were going to push guitars off the stage anyway."

It is some consolation, perhaps, that over the years, QSC became phenomenally successful as a leader in the pro sound business. Go to any movie theater in the U.S., and you're probably listen-

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

**TRAVELING IN EUROPE BACK IN THE '70S,
I GOT TO TALKING WITH A YUGOSLAVIAN
GUY—"HEY, HOW DO YOU LIKE LIVING IN
A COMMUNIST SLAVE STATE?" "SCREW OFF,
YANKEE MORON"—AND LIKE MANY FOLKS,
HE'D NEVER HEARD OF ORANGE COUNTY.
I RATTLED OFF OUR MORE NOTED CITY
NAMES, ALL DRAWING A BLANK UNTIL I
GOT TO FULLERTON. "FULLERTON!"
HE EXULTED. "HOME OF LEO FENDER!
STRATOCASTER! TELECASTER!"**

When LA's Rickenbacher company (since respelled Rickenbacker and relocated to Santa Ana) came up with the electric guitar and amp in the early 1930s, it was a godsend because guitarists until then were the weak sisters in

overdriven, and instead of accurate reproduction, you get everything from a singing sustain to a raw, distorted sound that bluesmen particularly used to great advantage. The fuzzed-out music of the '60s and beyond grew out of that. Tran-

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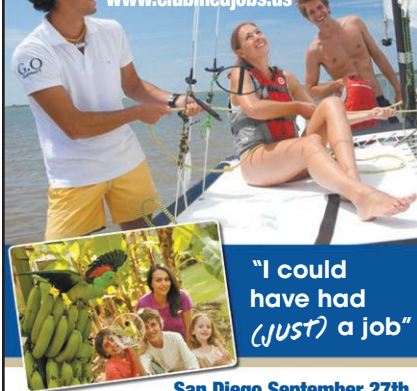
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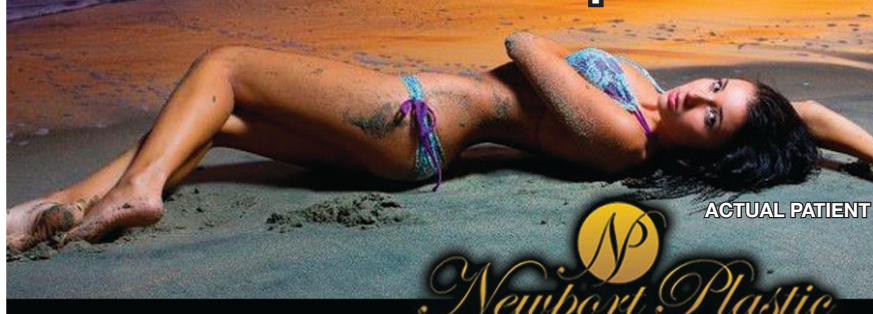
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Pat Quilter's Sound Revolution

» FROM PAGE 15

ing to QSC gear, and they're also huge with concert halls, touring sound companies and retail customers.

The company is privately held and doesn't release its numbers, though Quilter is comfortable saying it has sales well in excess of \$100 million per year.

QSC's buildings occupy 150,000 square feet of Costa Mesa, where some 400 people are employed at what *The Orange County Register* consistently rates as one of the best places to work in the county. (Contrast that with music-industry legend Gibson in Nashville, ranked by its employees as the worst job in the nation.)

The company is greener than the law requires and has a work environment that reflects Pat's thinking.

"Business presents problems," he explains. "My philosophy is: Solve the problems. You do that best in an environment of mutual respect and calm. We went into this with the feeling we had in the '60s, where we were

6-foot-4 frame into. His interest stems from the days when he and Matt would tool around in their dad's 1951 Volkswagen, and also because he likes the comic juxtaposition, "sort of like when you'd see the saxophone quartet at Disneyland, and the short guy was playing the big baritone sax."

Whenever I can't stand to type another word, such as now, I grab a guitar, switch on my always-handy Quilter Micropro 200 amp and play for a while. I bought one of the first ones, and it is my go-to amp. I've had all the cool-guy stuff—a '50s Fender Bassman and Deluxe, '60s Marshall Plexis, Vox AC-30s and a DeArmond—but I've forsaken them for Pat's little marvel. It sounds as rich and responsive as any tube amp I've had, puts out 200 watts—as though I'd ever need it—and remarkably weighs just more than 18 pounds.

Two years ago, Pat pretty much retired from QSC, and on that New Year's Eve, he launched Quilter Labs. Shortly thereafter, the five-employee

AT NORMAL VOLUMES, QUILTER'S AMPS USE ONLY ABOUT 15 PERCENT AS MUCH POWER AS A CONVENTIONAL AMP, MAKING IT A LOT MORE EFFICIENT THAN A PRIUS. THAT PLEASES PAT. "WE LIVE ON A FINITE PLANET WITH LIMITED RESOURCES. FORTUNATELY, THERE'S NO LIMIT ON KNOWLEDGE."

consciously reacting to and hopefully discarding all the corporate goopy, pretentious, unnecessary and unhelpful bullshit that attended the business of making a living. We've always been a highly informal company that likes to think we know how to do our work very well, but don't want to have to dress uncomfortably while we're doing it. That's as much a California thing as anything else."

While Pat was still the company's chief designer and technical problem-solver, he found time to pursue other interests. He has become one hell of a steel-guitar player, gamely fitting into Django-styled bands, beach parties and barbecue jams. He has collected some 100 lap steels and 20 vintage amps along the way. He has somewhat fewer early-20th-century wind-up phonographs to play his old 78s on, plus a great handful of micro-cars—including a Citroen 2CV, a Fiat Multipla 600, an Austin Mini micro-woodie and a Messerschmitt—that he can barely fit his

company released the Micropro, which combined decades of Pat's work on replicating the qualities of a tube amp with state-of-the-moment Class D technology.

Know what to do when the party is getting late and you want your friends to leave? Explain Class D amplification to them:

Remember that tiny signal an electric guitar produces? An amplifier basically tricks some of your wall current into mimicking that signal. In all previous amps, the transistors or tube acts like variable resistors, meaning they place obstacles in the big signal's path to make it behave like the little signal.

In Class D, the amp's circuit is more like a switch opening and closing incredibly fast. It's either on or off, and it is a whole kaboodle more efficient. The trick, Quilter says, is "you have to switch on and off at hundreds of kilohertz, so these pulses can blend together and form smooth audio pulses at 20 to 20 K. Do this, and you have a

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device that's 90 percent to 95 percent efficient compared to regular amps that are only 10 percent to 15 percent."

At normal volumes, Quilter's amps use only about 15 percent as much power as a conventional amp, making it a lot more efficient than a Prius. That pleases Pat.

"We live on a finite planet with limited resources. Fortunately, there's no limit on knowledge. The kind of conservation I like is where it's all win-win. Use knowledge wisely, and you get a smaller, lighter amp that uses less power and raw materials, saves manufacturing costs, saves shipping costs and takes up less space."

The Micropro was intentionally designed to stand out from the herd. The herd didn't much like that, perhaps because musicians thought the colorful amp looked like something their daughter would take to glee club. It's been a slow take-off. While Pat doesn't like to say how much of his own money he has pumped into Quilter Labs to keep it afloat, it's safe to say it's more than I'm going to earn over the rest of my life.

This year, the company released its more conventional-looking Aviator line and is getting a lot more notice. It isn't just aging journalists singing the amps' praises now.

To me, Los Lobos are the Beatles that never broke up. They just keep on growing, changing, challenging and becoming ever-more soulful. Singer/composer David Hidalgo is my kind of guitar god, always emotional, inventive and articulate. I've seen him play through nearly every sort of tube amp over the years, but now he's working out with a variety of Quilters.

A musician friend had told him about the amps, "so I looked the company up and found they're only half an hour from my home. I've been using their amps ever since," Hidalgo says by phone.

"I like the portability"—for fly-to gigs, he just stows an 8-pound Micropro head in his carry-on—"the reliability and mainly the tone. Right out of the gate, it sounds great, with all the sound of a tube amp. It has enough power for whatever you need. Also, when we played the Greek, they have a 95-decibel sound limit. With most amps, it's really hard to get a tone at low volume, but the Quilter worked perfect there."

Deke Dickerson is another total amp hound, to the degree that he owns one of Elvis' guitar player Scotty Moore's über-rare Echosonic amps and several of the nearly as rare 1950s Standel amps favored by Joe Maphis, Chet Atkins and other hot pickers. He just finished touring the U.S. by Cadillac, using a prototype Quilter Steelaire amp.

"All I'm ever looking for is the qualities of the old tube amps I like, and the Quilters really nail that," Dickerson says from his Valley abode. "The Steelaire kept reminding me of my old Standel amps, in the sense it was loud, clean, had a twangy bottom end, and didn't fart out on the low notes, which is everything I liked about my old Standels."

If the company keeps winning over players at its present rate, Pat may be able to take another vacation in a few years. While he's the resident genius, he leaves a lot of the lifting to the rest

of the crew, which includes CEO Chris Parks and COO Robert Becker, both of whom followed him from QSC and share his penchant for quixotic quests. Becker, for example, hopes to resurrect the Optigan, a weird 1970s budget Mellotron-like device originally marketed by Mattel. That, the Cyclops race car and other side-projects have been shelved for now, so they can focus on making a go of the amps.

For about 15 years, Pat was involved in being a mountain man, spending weekends with like-minded souls dressing and living as the rugged explorers of 150 years ago did. He learned to make his own buckskins, throw a tomahawk and sleep on the ground without whimpering, and he found out just how long it takes a guy to build a log cabin using only the hand tools of the 1800s.

Along with the physical conditioning, he thinks it helped him grow as a person. While he has been a whopping success and has helped countless other people, Pat's a bundle of insecurities. "I was always a bit of a scaredy cat about taking on challenges," he says. "Put me in a familiar situation, and I'm okay, but I'm not the type who sails off into the unknown. That's probably one of the reasons I've avoided relationships. They're fundamentally unnerving because you have no idea what might happen."

He finds his work and hobbies fulfilling and has enough of a social life with his friends and family. As for marrying and starting a family of his own, he says, "I think that ship has pretty much passed me by." Maybe he's right. If there's one thing women can't stand, it's a smart, tall, rich guy.

At work, Parks handles most of the marketing and interface with the public. "I like having someone else breaking the ice out front," Pat says. "Chris Parks does that here at Quilter. He's not afraid to charge ahead into the unknown territory. I wouldn't want to be that, until I'd radar-scoped the thing and figured where land mines were."

Yet Pat is the clear figurehead of the company, with his tall, silver-bearded visage as integral to the company identity as Colonel Sanders was to chicken. He's in their ads, and he's the star of a video they made in which he goes back in time to the beginning of tone. And it is his name on every product. If his new amps fail, he's the one all the I-told-you-sos will be sniggering at.

For a guy who doesn't like uncertainty, he has certainly ordered himself a jumbo portion of it. He's two years past retirement age; why not just go riding off into the sunset in one of his adorable little cars?

"What else am I going to do with myself? This is an opportunity to bring something new to the game, to give something back to the music business," he says. "Designing power amps is a pretty narrow specialty, and I happen to be expert in all three technologies: tubes, linear solid-state and Class D"—make that four types, if you count his wind-up Victrolas—"so I'm in a unique position to come up with something needed and new. I had hoped the uptake would be quicker, but it's working out in the long run."

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JOAN MARCUS

fri/09/20

[EXPO]

* Vape Up FIRST E-CIG EXPO

While states scramble to place laws on/restrict/control the current e-cig/vape trend (make it prescription only? Really?), the West Coast Vapers Club says, "The more the merrier" as it hosts the first electronic cigarette convention in Anaheim this weekend. For those who like to vape, this event has it all: prizes, vendors, modders, new products, vape lounges, cash bars, food trucks, educational information and all those flavors! And though e-cigarettes are a healthier alternative to smoking actual cancer sticks, you still have to be at least 18 to attend (and 21 to buy booze). We still have some laws, ya know—though we feel as though we're about to get a few more.

First E-Cig Expo at the Anaheim Convention Center, 800 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 765-8950; www.ecc-expo.com. See website for times. Free with online registration; \$5 at the door. 18+.

—ERIN DEWITT

[THEATER]

In Tune Mandy Patinkin

Long before he played the crotchety, heavily bearded, terrorist foil Saul Berenson on Showtime's hit series *Homeland*, Mandy Patinkin played the incensed, heavily bearded, fascist foil Che Guevara in *Evita* and the testy, heavily bearded, Jewish cross-dresser foil Avigdor in *Yentl*. In only one of these did we actually get to hear him sing (and sing damn impressively—even though his fleshy flashes in *Yentl* ain't nothing to sniff at), and if you've never heard this titan of song strut his vocalist vocation, well, you must be a *goy* or a *meshugener*—or both. Do not let this pile of *bupkis* continue, my gentiles, and get yourselves to the Cerritos Center, where you're sure to be surrounded by a mass of adoring *bubbes*, bluebloods and gay boys because that's how the Patinkin rolls: sexy, stealthy and always a mensch.

Mandy Patinkin at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Dr., Cerritos, (562) 916-8500; www.cerritoscenter.com. 8 p.m. \$40-\$85.

—SR DAVIES

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sat/09/21

[CONCERT]

* What a Killer TWEAK BIRD

Volcom's duo Tweak Bird—actual brothers, too, if you like that extra blood credibility—make giant or possibly giant-killing heavy rock music akin to their spirit guides in the Melvins or Big Business, in which the songs have plenty of hooks solely to catch more fresh meat. They don't shred so much as stomp, probably to leave terrifying footprints to fossilize afterward. Supporting band the Shrine, however, completely shred—at the kind of level that demands industrial-strength protection, and if we told you this was gonna be like '80 Motörhead and '82 Black Flag, you better take that as instructions to strap on a helmet. And then there's Retox, which is Justin Pearson and his cohorts doing discordant hardcore with fearsome vigor. This is a killer show—wear some skulls!

Tweak Bird with the Shrine, Retox and Babylon Sweethearts at Detroit Bar, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 642-0600; www.detroitbar.com. 8 p.m. \$10. 21+. —CHRIS ZIEGLER

[CONCERT]

New Wave to the Grave Flashback Jack

You don't have to be a music historian to know the impact of bands such as Blondie, Sugarhill Gang or the Psychedelic Furs. Their music strikes a chord in the hearts of many locals who grew up on KROQ's alternative hit parade.

This weekend, they appear as part of Jack FM's Flashback Jack concert, which also includes Berlin, the Fixx and Adam Ant in a star-studded throwback, for which a portion of the proceeds go to TACA (Talk About Curing Autism). A presence throughout the concert will be original KROQ DJ Richard Blade, one of the early champions of punk and new wave, who still carries on in his DJ booth. Each band on the lineup is a legend—and legends never die.

Flashback Jack at the Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 704-2500; www.hondacenter.com. 4:45 p.m. \$36-\$101.

—AIMEE MURILLO



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[CONCERT]

Leaving Her Mark Little Boots

Pint-size spitfire Little Boots kicks in the door of the Constellation Room, as she starts her North American tour. Taking inspiration from such varied artists as Edgar Allen Poe, Britney Spears (who hasn't, though, honestly?) and Kraftwerk, the English electropop singer released her second album this year, *Nocturnes*, to the grasping hands of club kids and critics alike. Known as Victoria Hesketich when she's not onstage or behind a DJ booth, her soprano vocal range combined with the ability to play a rainbow of eclectic instruments (ever heard of a Tenori-on?) transforms her sound into an electronic music wonderland. But this was a journey she had to take alone—after singing with the Lancashire Youth Jazz Orchestra and fronting all-girl band Dead Disco, Hesketich realized her small feet were made for walking solo. Get ready for an amazing night of electronic infatuation.

Little Boots at the Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com. 8 p.m. \$15.
—ERIN DEWITT

mon/09/23

[COMEDY]

True Story WHY, BRY?

For fanboys of AMC's reality show *Comic Book Men*, centered on the on-goings of Jay and Silent Bob's Secret Stash, Kevin Smith's Jersey-based comic book store, this Monday night at the Brea Improv is a sci-fi fantasy come true. And for everyone else—well, who doesn't love Kevin Smith? His co-host for the evening is Bryan Johnson, also known as Beard-Guy on the show—and a staple on Smith's mega-hit podcasts. For tonight's act, Smith and Johnson take a page from those podcasts (ranked a Best Of on iTunes) with their "Why, Bry?" segment. Here, Johnson reveals warped, hysterical, unbelievable *Springer*-type stories from his years in New Jersey, such as the one about his girlfriend's mom who, um, really liked him. It's going to be a wonderfully depraved evening.

Why, Bry? at the Brea Improv, 120 S. Brea Blvd., Brea, (714) 482-0700; www.improv.com. 8 p.m. \$25. 18+.
—ERIN DEWITT

[BENEFIT]

Puppy Love 4LIFE ANIMAL RESCUE BENEFIT AND COMEDY SHOW

It's a classic story: You've already removed your bra and slipped into your fat pants for the night. You move to the couch, a quart of Ben and Jerry's in hand, to watch some classic *Housewives*-esque girl-on-girl scream-fighting to forget your day and relax. But when you switch to Bravo, Sarah mutha-fuckin' McLachlan is singing over pictures of doggies and kitties in a near-death state, staring at you with their sad animal eyes. And there it is: evening ruined. Animals need homes—this is a sad truth—but we humans need laughter. That's why OC's 4Life Animal Rescue partnered with the Irvine Improv to host a benefit and comedy show aimed at generating funds to find our four-legged friends forever homes. Featuring comedians Jason Collings, Friendly Frank and more, this afternoon is sure to have everyone feeling good. Only tears from laughter are allowed.

4Life Animal Rescue Benefit and Comedy Show at the Irvine Improv, 71 Fortune Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455; www.improv.com. 1 p.m. \$35. 13+.
—AMANDA PARSONS

tue/09/24

[CONCERT]

Fulfill the Dream Minus the Bear

The Glass House gets all proggy this Tuesday night with the arrival of Seattle's Minus the Bear. Though still on good terms with Dangerbird Records, the group are enjoying the recent release of *Acoustics II* on their own label, Tigre Blanco.

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Returning to the roots of 2008's *Acoustics* album, this new project is an unplugged collection of eight old songs and two new ones, resulting in an assemblage of lullabies suitable for the next generation of the indie prog set, asleep in their flannel onesies. Perhaps it's the influence of several band members now having children. And what does Minus the Bear's future hold? Not even the band members themselves can answer—and they're enjoying that newfound freedom. Catch them this week—there's no telling when they'll be back.

Minus the Bear with Tera Melos and the New Trust at the Glass House, 200 W. Second St., Pomona; www.theglasshouse.us. 7 p.m. \$20. All ages. —ERIN DEWITT

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CONSTIPATION?

Does chronic constipation put a cramp in your lifestyle? If so you may be interested to know that Community Clinical Trials is looking for participants to take part in a research study for Chronic Idiopathic Constipation (constipation due to an unknown reason).

If you are 18 years of age or older, have a confirmed history of chronic constipation, and experience less than three bowel movements a week you may be eligible to participate in this study. To see if you may qualify call Community Clinical Trials at 714-835-1870.

Qualified study participants will receive all study-related clinic visits, medical exams, lab assessments and study medication or inactive placebo at no cost, plus financial compensation for time and travel. Health insurance is not required.



For more information, or to see if you may qualify to participate in this chronic constipation study call Community Clinical Trials at 714-835-1870



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wed/09/25

[CONCERT]

Piano Man

Hershey Felder as Franz Liszt in *RockStar!*

If you're not familiar with the name Hershey Felder, don't worry: This blurb has nothing to do with fetish porn. Rather, the Laguna Playhouse features the Canadian actor/musician/playwright (with the unsettling name) using his exceptional talents to showcase both music and theater in a tribute to famed 19th-century Hungarian composer Franz Liszt. Referred to as the "piano rock star" of the era, Liszt came from a movement known as the German New School. In simple terms, the age following Beethoven's death. You've gotta admire Felder's ardent ambition—a guy who created an acclaimed one-man show about the life of George Gershwin, now tackling mercurial Hungarian pianists and doing so with dramatic perfection. He's quite the renaissance man.

Hershey Felder as Franz Liszt in *RockStar!* at the Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach, (949) 497-2787; www.lagunaplayhouse.com. 7:30 p.m. Through Sept. 29. \$40-\$60. —BRANDON FERGUSON

[THEATER]

Smooth Sailing *Anything Goes*

Since its Broadway debut in 1934, *Anything Goes* has seen revival after revival on stage, television and film—and here comes another one. This Tony Award-winning musical features music and lyrics by star composer Cole Porter and continues to hold rank as a popular choice among theaters on a national level. *Anything Goes* follows Billy Crocker, a stowaway on an ocean liner heading from New York to London, as he tries to win the love of an engaged heiress, Hope Harcourt. With the help of a few friends aboard the ship, Billy is able to sneak in some alone time with Hope—but money and deceit may keep them apart. As with any great musical, *Anything Goes* features songs that endure through generations, including "I Get a Kick Out of You," "You're the Top" and, of course, "Anything Goes."

Anything Goes at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787; www.scfta.org. 7:30 p.m. Through Sept. 29. \$20-\$89. —JESSICA FORD

thu/09/26

[CONCERT]

From the Heart

India.Arie

After a whopping 21 Grammy nominations, multiple top spots on Billboard's R&B Album Chart and more than 10 million

records sold worldwide, musical powerhouse India.Arie focused her talents into one streamlined idea: She created SoulBird, an organization with the "mission to spread love, healing, peace and joy through the power of words and music." And a flock of SoulBirds was born, people dedicated to bettering the world. India.Arie, a singer/songwriter with a voice like silver, is able to do what so many artists only dream of: truly inspire others. She has performed for Nelson Mandela, President Barack Obama and the Dalai Lama—and now, touring in support of her new album, *SongVersation*, she sings just for you.

India.Arie at the City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2700; www.citynationalgroveofanaheim.com. 8 p.m. \$37.50-\$45. —ERIN DEWITT



Going Strong

GIN BLOSSOMS

The Gin Blossoms' first claim to fame? They were named Best Rock Band in a *Phoenix New Times* readers' poll back in the late '80s. And after a quick rise to almost-stardom, the band fumbled, stumbled, found their footing and soldiered on, becoming one very successful outfit throughout the following decade. With songs such as "Hey Jealousy," "Found Out About You" and "Until I Fall Away," the group's place in great '90s pop/rock is undeniably cemented—if only thanks to their spot on the *Empire Records* soundtrack. Their breakup in 1997 was quiet and, thankfully, rather quick; they reunited in 2002 and have kept a steady pace of recording and touring since. Catch them at the Coach House this week and relive those glory years of '90s radio.

Gin Blossoms with Zach Churchill and Trevi at the Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 496-8930; www.thecoachhouse.com. 8 p.m. \$30. —ERIN DEWITT

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Papa's Got a Brand-New Bag

Papa Hassan's: now in Anaheim, serving the same Middle Eastern comfort food

BY EDWIN GOEI

Do you remember your first shawerma? I do. It was 15, maybe 20 years ago. As with a hazy memory of a movie in which I can recall the actors but not the plot, I only remembered where I had it: Papa Hassan's in Orange, the place where so many Orange Countians had their first taste of hummus and kebabs. I recall walking up to the shack on Glassell Street, ordering from a window and eating the shawerma right there on the sidewalk. That location no longer exists. After it suffered a devastating fire in 2010 and the building was sold to Chapman University, owner Mahmoud Haidar decided it was time to start over after nearly 35 years in business.

Papa Hassan's has re-emerged on Brookhurst Street, Middle Eastern comfort food lost in a vast jungle of regional restaurants in Anaheim's Little Arabia. Squeezed in tight between a halal Sizzler and a hookah store, the location is akin to Harry Potter's Platform nine and three-quarters—you have to know it's there. To me, visiting the new place felt as though I were meeting up with an old friend. At first, I didn't recognize him. The new restaurant—open since 2011—looks nothing like the old one; it's now more of a fast-casual than a full-service place. But once I bit into the shawerma, it's as though I was right back on that Old Towne Orange sidewalk.

The tightly swaddled cylinder weighed as heavy as a shotput in my hand. But as I ate, peeling back the paper as my bites progressed, I realized why I liked it so much: The shawerma operates on the same wavelength as an In-N-Out burger. Just as at In-N-Out, Papa Hassan's knows you need a healthy dose of garden-fresh veggies to answer the protein. The result is a very balanced wrap—as refreshing as it is filling. There's the shrill juiciness of tomato, the spicy-but-sweet hits of onion complementing the steady hum of beef in the background.

Though I tasted hints of mint and tahini instead of Thousand Island, I found myself lapping up the leftover drippings from its wrapping as though I just finished a Double-Double.

What I don't remember was how steak-like the meat is. Though Papa Hassan's may shave the shawerma from a spinning cone of beef and lamb as you'll find elsewhere, the meat here chews

chicken, a rotisserie bird not unlike the ones at Zankou. If you have at least three other people with you, you want the whole hen: served in two halves, ready to be drawn and quartered with a bronzed skin so well-rendered that it breaks off in literal shards. The meat is juicy where it isn't crispy, and when you dab a little of that chile paste, you forget all about that much-lauded garlic sauce Zankou serves with its fowl.

When you overdo it with the chile paste—and you will—you'll want the lebni, a cooling bowl of yogurt with pieces of cucumber and peppermint you scoop up with torn pita bread. You also want the falafels—dense, craggly balls that can be had in a wrap, in a sort-of-salad with sides of tahini and hummus, or even in a burger. But if you're going to have a real dinner, opt for the communal mound of food called the Beiruti feast: a grand sampler platter set over fries with two skewers each of the chicken, beef and kafta kebabs. The latter is especially good. Also included: a bowl of hummus, a watery baba ganoush, diced roasted tomatoes and onions, and scattering of fried-and-grilled pita-bread triangles you use like chips. Before this, start your meal with dolmas so aggressively sour they made my cheeks hurt or the batata harra, fried potatoes blasted with a hot paste redolent of garlic and red pepper seeds.

End with the dessert called "Heaven." It's actually aish al saraya, a thrilling chilled Lebanese bread pudding layered with custard, dripping with the sweetness of honey and topped with whipped cream—one of the best things I've tasted this year. Decades from now, after I've ordered it from every place that offers it, I'll remember where I had it first: here at the new Papa Hassan's.

PAPA HASSAN'S GRILL

882 S. Brookhurst St., Anaheim, (714) 533-7338; papahassan grill.com. Open daily, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Dinner for two, \$10-\$30, food only. No alcohol.



COME FOR THE SHAWERMA, STAY FOR THE CHILE PASTE

ELEONOR SEGURA

as though it were cut directly from a piece of sirloin. Also new to me: the service. Both the young woman in a hijab and her co-worker, an older man with close-cropped hair, couldn't have been warmer. During both trips I made, they offered me a thimble of the house hot sauce—an indispensable condiment that shouldn't be ignored or underestimated. The paste, which has the thick consistency of Indonesian sambal, burned with the fierceness of Tapatio and a smoky finish, as though the peppers involved were roasted before being pulverized.

It can be slathered on everything, but you should especially use it on the

HOLE IN THE WALL

» GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Meat at Joe's

JOE SCHMOE'S

5123 Ball Rd., Cypress, (714) 527-4310.

I've been mad at Cypress ever since its high school beat my alma mater, Anaheim High, in the CIF Division IX football championship back in 2007. We made up a bit with Cambino's, an awesome Asian barbecue—but that closed a couple of years ago, and I got pissed anew. Why, if it weren't for Cafe Hiro, Loft Hawaiian BBQ and Señor Big Ed's, Cypress could very well have joined Mission Viejo and Brea in my civic doghouse.

And if it weren't for an anonymous letter, which included the menu, it might've taken me months to know about Joe Schmoie's. If I were speeding down Ball Road, as I'm wont to do, I would've allowed my annoyance with Cypress to mistake Joe Schmoie's for a Wiener-schnitzel, what with its bright awning, A-frame building and strip-mall existence. And even if I noticed this new restaurant, its streetside sign promising "Classic dogs, hamburgers and frozen custard," I might've still just whizzed by on the way to Los Alamitos. But thankfully, I'm not petty. After getting that menu, I manned up, visited Joe Schmoie's—and have been returning frequently since.

The tiny place is the latest example of our hot-dog renaissance, an epoch that finds a wiener covered in relish, mustard and ketchup no longer good enough, that has inspired middle-aged men and women to hearken to the franks of their youthful travels (or is it the influence of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*?) and offer them to a new generation. So it's not good enough to have a bacon-wrapped hot dog here; you'll also find a Chicago dog, a Ripper Dog from New Jersey and dogs from Dixie bathed in creamy coleslaw. Those regional specialties are fine, but I prefer Joe's creations: a chile verde dog that seems beamed from 1960s San Bernardino, so Cal-Mex it is; another one filled with pastrami and a prickly Russian dressing; and a monster called a Spicy Redneck Dog that takes a bacon-wrapped hot dog and buries it under chili, coleslaw and fried jalapeños—as filling as it sounds.

Joe Schmoie's is still relatively new, so here's to hoping its hamburgers eventually reach the heights of its dogs; right now, they're good, but just there. Better is the frozen custard: perfect served plain, greater when spiked with everything from peanut butter cups to chunks of Heath Bars. And the draft beer behind the counter, not too far from the milkshake machine? Beautiful. More of this, Cypress, and maybe I'll give you a call one of these days. . . .

GARELLANO@OCWEEKLY.COM

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food»

Shake, Waffle and Roll

Brian Fast of Waff-N-Roll

Luxe *lonchera* owner Brian Fast is no stranger to food service, having worked at Arthur's Coffee Shop in La Habra, but he is relatively new to the mobile-meal scene. He collaborates with chef consultant Elizabeth Whitt to create fulfilling meals sandwiched in a waffle made with no oil.

**BEST THING SINCE
BREAST MILK!**



CHRISTINA BRYSON

OC WEEKLY: What sparked the idea of Waff-N-Roll?

BRIAN FAST: It was the smartest way for me to enter the emerging world-wide waffle-sandwich market. Also, the thought of a restaurant with a transmission simultaneously intrigued and terrified me—so I knew I had to do it. What surprised you most about operating a luxe *lonchera*? Everything shakes . . . all the time. Is there a dish you'd like to learn how to make?

The best coq au vin in the world. Where was your most recent meal? Nirvana Grill in Laguna Beach. Poblano chile appetizer, vegetarian risotto and whole sea bass—pretty awesome. Your earliest food memory: Breast milk.

Let's talk about your waffles. What makes them special? Waff-N-Roll waffles are oil-free and very crispy. Depending on the sandwich, the customer may detect notes of yeast, malt or vanilla in their waffle. Our custom waffle-plate design and batters produce waffles that maintain their crispness and complement almost all fillings and flavor profiles.

ON THE LINE

» ANNE MARIE PANORINGAN

What is your most popular item? Slow-braised, pulled-pork waffle sandwich with house-made mango-chipotle barbecue sauce and a sweet-and-creamy slaw.

From what do you draw inspiration for your menu?

I thought of how I could put my favorite foods into my unique waffle.

Can you describe the theme at both Arthur's and Waff-N-Roll?

Arthur's Coffee Shop is wholesome food meets truck-stop chic. Waff-N-Roll is Brussels meets Memphis at Coachella, with Muse playing, Dave Chappelle crushing the backstage party and Julia Child giggling from above.

Favorite places to eat (besides your own):

The Golden Truffle, Three Seventy Common, Vine, Tabu Grill, Nick's in Laguna Beach.

We read you opened a coffee stand when you were younger?

The story was my attempt—evidently misunderstood—to plant some irreverent sense of humor on my bestbreakfastoc.com website for Arthur's Coffee Shop in La Habra. I thought it would be an obvious attempt to mock the contrived "image stories" by management of large chain restaurants, such as Mimi's Cafe, a practice for which I have a well-developed disdain. Perhaps because the stories always leave me wondering if management believes I have the IQ of Honey BooBoo.

One food you can't live without:

Our juicy fried chicken with chipotle-maple drizzle waffle sandwich. Because it contains the four essential food groups: flour, salt, fat and sugar.

Culinarily speaking, Orange County has the best:

Waffle-sandwich food trucks.

What is your goal for Waff-N-Roll?

The answer is somewhere between one great OC waffle-sandwich truck and worldwide waffle-sandwich domination. You're making breakfast. What are you having?

Something, anything smothered in country bacon gravy. Or prunes.

Weirdest customer request (and did you do it?):

Make over-hard eggs with the yolks hard and the whites runny. I was less-than-respectful with my denial.

Best advice for aspiring truck owners:

Same as my best travel advice: Bring a sense of humor, half the clothes and double the money.

Visit Waff-N-Roll at www.waffnroll.com, and follow it on Twitter: @waffnroll.

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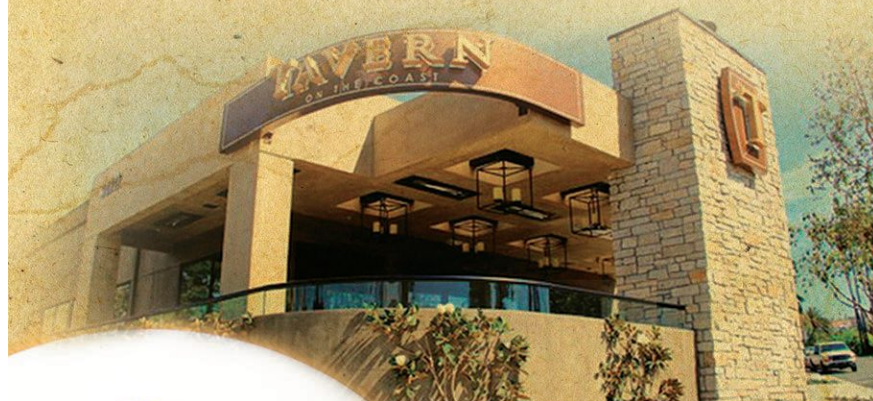
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food»

SIGNAL HILL
SUB ALL-STARS



'Wich Royalty

Sub-King brings salvation to Signal Hill's office drones

As anyone who has ever worked in a faceless, nameless office park knows, the local sandwich stop is worth its weight in smoke breaks. Buried inside a suite in the back corner of an industrial area, these catchall places with weird weekday hours usually serve as part 7-Eleven, part doughnut shop, a testament to the isolation of the operation. But remove the candy bars and diner coffee, and the sandwiches are rarely good enough to carry the business on their own.



A SQUAWKING
BIG SUB

Not so for Sub-King. Maybe because it's in an actual strip mall off Signal Hill's main drag, or maybe because it strives to live up to its sandwich-touting name, but Sub-King is the office-park sandwich shack with appeal that goes beyond the cubicle dwellers toiling nearby. More than 35 sandwiches await consumption at the small counter-service establishment, ranging from healthy (turkey and cheese) to heavy (the "Super Reuben" adds pastrami), all made by a friendly Korean couple. Most people find what they love here

LONG BEACH LUNCH

» SARAH BENNETT

and stick with it, but thankfully for the variety-seekers trapped in cubes nearby, Sub-King is also the kind of place where you can switch it up. Get a BLT one day and a French dip the next, and leave full and satisfied every time.

Feeling adventurous and lured by the daily \$6.99 special, I ordered the tuna and avocado on squaw, a sliced-bread affront to the local nazis who swear by "home-bake" stuff—long rolls of various persuasions made on site every day that sit behind the counter in plastic wrap. But the squaw just felt right for a sandwich overstuffed with the house tuna, itself a masterpiece of relish and onions, with mayo in moderation so you won't gag. And I'm glad I stuck with the suggested carb offerings—the dark bread created a perfect foundation for the texture of soft tuna with crunchy lettuce and fatty avocado.

With a Subway across the street and a Togos down the block, it's not like the area lacks in options for a cheap sandwich. But if you are craving some meat-and-bread deliciousness during the wonky hours of Sub-King, it's best to stick with the office workers on this one and go for a classic sub at Signal Hill's finest.

SUB-KING

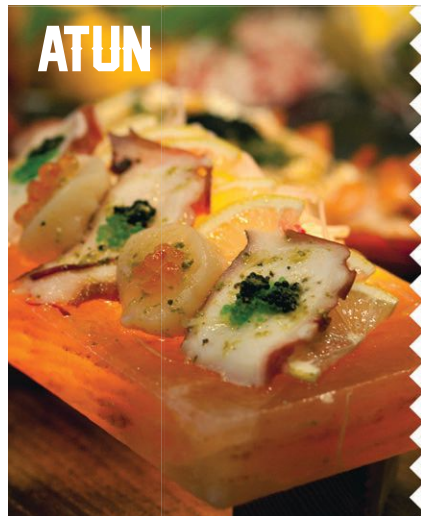
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ATUN

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Atun is a beautiful new restaurant located in the historic Bixby Knolls neighborhood of Long Beach. Its traditional Japanese izakaya and yakitori flare pairs well with sake or beer. Atun also features a selection of fresh sushi, with high-quality seafood flown in from all over the world and served at the peak of freshness.

Executive Chef Yama has expertly crafted French and Italian culinary traditions an array of signature sauces to marry with his creations. Another knockout item is the Baked Lobster Dynamite, with creamy hints of mayonnaise and tangy ponzu atop a perfectly decadent, whole lobster tail. Chef Yama's creations are full of whimsy, wonderful flavor and truly inspired concepts.

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food»



How to Beat the Heat

Champurrado and pan dulce from Las 3 Princesas

There are a million places to get breakfast and dozens of Mexican bakeries that sell pan dulce straight out of the oven, so why this one in particular? Why this little hole in the wall, located in the upper reaches of Santa Ana, far away from anything else worth pursuing?

Oaxacan chocolate tucked into soft rolls, that's why. And pan de muerto, even when it's not pan de muerto season. And pan de anís; fresh, hot conchas; cups of steaming-hot champurrado once it gets

EAT THIS NOW

» DAVE LIEBERMAN

a little colder; and owners who will be honest and tell you when you're eyeing something that needs refreshing.

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LAS 3 PRINCESAS

2736 N. Bristol St., Santa Ana, (714) 542-2131.

DRINK OF THE WEEK

» EDWIN GOEI

Flying Horse Royal Lager Beer at Royal Khyber

My rule-of-thumb when ordering beer with Asian food is to go with the indigenous brand. Thai food? Chang or Singha. At a Japanese izakaya? You can't go wrong with Sapporo, Kirin or Asahi. Korean? Hite—no question. Indian? You'll mostly be offered three choices: Kingfisher (arguably India's predominant brand), Taj Mahal or Flying Horse.

At Royal Khyber in Santa Ana, the Indian beer options are narrowed down to just the latter two. Both are actually bottled by the same conglomerate that makes Kingfisher: the United Breweries Group, based out of Bangalore and the equivalent of Anheuser-Busch—if Anheuser-Busch also operated an airline and a fertilizer business. I chose the Flying Horse to head off the spice-laden curries I was about to consume.

THE DRINK

It came in a big, sweaty, 22-ounce bottle, which, of course, can also be bought at BevMo! for less than is charged here. The staff at Royal Khyber poured it into a Taj Mahal glass, but what I noticed right away was how incredibly fizzy and light this brew was, with a head that subsided almost immediately. An Indian friend of mine told me later that he



ONE BHANGRA
OF A BEER

thinks this may be by design: the fizziness allows it to hold on to the cold longer, a thing of value in subtropical climates. But most of all, it's refreshing. There's just a hint of spice and fruit at the top, and it wasn't hoppy or bitter at the finish. All of this makes the lager go down as easy as lemonade, easier than its 4.7 percent ABV would normally suggest. And yes, it was the perfect thing to douse the fires of that searing vindaloo I ate with it.

ROYAL KHYBER

1621 Sunflower Ave., Santa Ana,
(714) 436-1010; www.royalkhyber.com.



Un-Formula One

Rush's racers draw new life from Ron Howard
BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

It's 1976, a year when all the groovy girls are traipsing around in tiny suede skirts and all the cool guys have *Badfinger* hair. One of those guys was English racing driver James Hunt, the charismatic rascal who won that year's Formula One World Championship—the embroidered badge on his driving suit read, “Sex, the Breakfast of Champions.” His nemesis, Austrian-born Niki Lauda, was something else, a straight arrow with square hair and equally rigid rules about how, exactly, one ought to put the pedal to the metal.

Lauda had won the championship in 1975 and had every reason to think he could do so again. What happened when he faced Hunt during the 1976 season surprised, horrified and ultimately amazed everyone who followed the sport. That championship year is the subject of *Rush*, which pulls off a mini-miracle itself: It's both a perceptive dual character study and, that rarity of rarities, a large-scale action movie for grown-ups, one worth leaving the house for.

It's also the last thing you might expect from Ron Howard, a director who has made some terrific films (*Splash*, *Frost/Nixon*), but whose earnestness and dutiful, workmanlike approach has also resulted in prestige snoozers such as

Apollo 13. Then again, this is the guy who made his directing debut with *Grand Theft Auto* for schlock impresario Roger Corman, and *Rush* seems to have shaken something awake in him. If the storytelling sometimes feels a bit scrambled—Howard tries to pack a lot, maybe too much, into 123 surprisingly fleet minutes—the racing sequences make up for it. *Rush* is flawed but alive, and its actors never get lost in the blur of speed. If the movie is partly about machines—a flimsy type of race car that Hunt calls “just a little coffin, really”—it's just as much about men who know precisely what to do in those split seconds when there's no time to blink, let alone think.

Chris Hemsworth, of *Thor* fame, plays Hunt, and you can see why the driver is a national treasure even in a country that's almost embarrassed to have national treasures. Hunt is England's version of California: blond, insouciant and randy. He loves the ladies almost as much as he loves driving—early in the film, he stands before a gaggle of goggle-eyed nurses and introduces himself, 007-style, as “Hunt. James Hunt.” But the person who really gets under his skin is Lauda, played by Daniel Brühl. The two meet, very uncute. They walk away from their first and every subsequent encounter muttering, “asshole.”

But Lauda and Hunt are always there for each other, sometimes more so than for the women in their lives. (Olivia Wilde plays Hunt's wife, the model Suzy Miller, who left him for Richard Burton after his indifference toward her became unbearable; the stunning Romanian-born actress Alexandra Maria Lara plays Lauda's loyal partner, Marlene, though the womenfolk are pretty much relegated to the backseat here.) Lauda and Hunt growl and spar, but they also urge

Rush . . . pulls off a mini-miracle itself: It's both a perceptive dual character study and, that rarity of rarities, a large-scale action movie for grown-ups, one worth leaving the house for.

each other on, understanding each other better than anyone else ever could. At one point, Hunt explains in voice-over, “The closer you are to death, the more alive you feel,” a sentiment brought home to Lauda the hard way. In case you don't know the story, I won't divulge the details here, but Howard, working from a script by Peter Morgan, dramatizes the event that changed Lauda's life in a way that's horrifying and direct; he hits a pitch of fiery, claustrophobic intensity that's hard to shake.

Hemsworth's Hunt is rakish and undeniably adorable. He's the one you want to look at, but Brühl is the one you want to watch. His Lauda is at first

deeply unlikely and uncharismatic, a glowering gnat. But he knows himself and his limitations intimately, in a way that Hunt doesn't, and Brühl plays that confidence as an alternative kind of sex appeal. Lauda is a hard-ass and a grind, assertive to the point of cockiness, but you root for him. In a line of work in which time means everything, he doesn't have a minute to spare for idiots.

Hunt died of a heart attack at age 45; Lauda is alive today. *Rush* is a fuel-injected valentine to them both, a love letter written with cursive sweeps of movement and grand whooshes of sound. The racing sequences, as shot by cinematographer Anthony Dod Mantle and edited by Daniel P. Hanley and Mike Hill, are fleet, exhilarating, stunning in their detail: At one point, the flagman at the finish line leaps into the air, bringing his flag down with a flourish before being blown back by the force of the car passing him. The moment is over in a flash, a treasure barely captured. I have an ailing 17-year-old cat who creeps toward the TV, fascinated, whenever any of the *Transporter* movies or a random NASCAR race pops up on the screen during his humans' channel surfing. His love of fast cars surpasses that of any man I know. I hope he can make it until *Rush* comes out on DVD. But anyone who can get to the theater on two legs—or four wheels—should see it on the big screen.

RUSH

was directed by Ron Howard; written by Peter Morgan; and stars Chris Hemsworth, Daniel Brühl, Olivia Wilde and Alexandra Maria Lara. Rated PG-13.

OC WEEKLY

ZONE PAGES

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opening

RUSH See "Un-Formula One," page 29.

ongoing

CLOSED CIRCUIT There's a fine line between restrained and drab, and *Closed Circuit* falls just on the wrong side of it. Even though the film is set in modern-day London and produced by the same people who brought us *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, it's curiously lacking in urgency. Eric Bana plays Martin Rose, a lawyer who's assigned, at the last minute, to defend Farouk Erdogan (Denis Moschitto), a possible terrorist accused of playing a role in a deadly explosion in a London market. The case is hardly straightforward to begin with, but, as it turns out, the government has some classified evidence that it plans to use to prosecute Erdogan, info so secret that neither Erdogan nor his defense team is allowed to see it. So the attorney general—officially jovial, as played by Jim Broadbent—appoints a special advocate, Claudia Simmons-Howe (Rebecca Hall), who is allowed to see the evidence but must not disclose its contents to the defendant or his lawyers. The hitch: Claudia and Martin used to be lovers, and the affair didn't end well. The plot leans heavily on paranoia, and it's all supposed to make us question our assumptions about terrorism and the eagerness of world governments to find scapegoats. There's just no pulse to the story—it feels like a dutiful exercise. As a leading man, or as anything, really, Bana is handsome only in a flavorless way. His brows are earnest, his chin finely chiseled, but so little personality comes through, I always find myself wanting to add an "I" to the end of his name. (R) Stephanie Zacharek. *Countywide*.

IN A WORLD . . . In the world of *In a World . . .*, the directing debut of preternaturally understated comic actress Lake Bell, voiceover work—specifically the authoritative yet anonymous man-speak heard in movie trailers—is a field in which women aren't welcome. Bell, who also wrote the script, plays Carol, an underemployed vocal coach who aspires to be a voiceover star like her callous, egomaniac father, Sam (Fred Melamed). She isn't just your garden-variety underachiever; Carol is so underachieving that, at age 31, she hasn't changed her wardrobe since the 1990s. It's one of the movie's subtle oddball touches that Bell's Carol, a tall drink of water if ever there was one, strides around unselfconsciously—and a little cluelessly—in overalls and college-kid babydoll dresses. But even if she's a neurotic goofball, she's persistent. And with the help of smart but bashful sound engineer Louis (Demetri Martin), who harbors a crush on her, she scrambles to the top of the voiceover heap—only to earn the resentment of key players in the field, most notably her nasty old dad. Bell has made a lively, modern screwball comedy with a terrible title; the dialogue moves fast and sometimes takes nutty, unexpected loops, like puppies scrambling over one another in a basket. Bell, who has so often played second or third banana (in pictures like *It's Complicated* and *No Strings Attached*), makes a strangely fetching leading woman. The romance between Carol and Louis takes forever to get cooking—their mutual awkwardness is today's equivalent of a bundling board. But it's also part of their charm as a couple-in-training; their respective

peculiarities fit together just right. (R) Stephanie Zacharek. *Edwards Westpark 8, Irvine; Regency Rancho Niguel, Laguna Niguel*.

THE MORTAL INSTRUMENTS: CITY OF BONES The ingredients of successful young-adult fantasy franchises have, with repetition, become immediately apparent: easily identifiable heroes and immersive, magical world-building. For every multi-film Harry Potter phenomenon there's a handful of *Golden Compasses* or *Eragons*, indicating that the target demo, adolescents, are savvy consumers. They know that the best of these series construct deeply felt mythologies around characters fans feel like they could somehow be. The first adaptation of Cassandra Clare's *The Mortal Instruments* novels, *City of Bones*, does neither, playing onscreen as an endless parade of derivative genre tropes, even tedious and convoluted when it dares to break the formula—there may or may not be an incest subplot. Lily Collins headlines as Clary Fray, a teenager who quickly discovers that she and her mother, Jocelyn (Lena Headey), are shadowhunters, those of angelic blood who hunt demons. Jace Wayland (Jamie Campbell Bower), another shadowhunter, comes to her rescue when Clary discovers that her mother is missing. Simon (Robert Sheehan), Clary's best friend, is a mundane, a person unable to see these magical realms. Together, the trio begins the usual epic adventure of good vs. evil in which ancient worlds collide and Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Jared Harris engage in swordplay. The nomenclature varies slightly, but there's little new or exciting in *City of Bones*. For strong female role models and unique fantasy settings, stick with *The Hunger Games*. The adaptation of the second book has already been announced, but the series already seems as if it has outlived its mortality. (PG-13) John Oursler. *Countywide*.

RIDDICK Richard B. Riddick—Dick to his friends, if he had any—is an intergalactic meathead who's glowered through three movies, two video games, and a cartoon. He's both the luckiest and unluckiest man alive:

lucky because he's impossible to kill, unlucky because everyone keeps trying. In the opening, near-silent sequence of *Riddick*, the laconic sequel to 2004's overblown schlock opera *The Chronicles of Riddick*, our hero (Vin Diesel) is nearly slain by a space vulture, a space hyena, and several space eels. "There are bad days, and then there are legendary bad days," he growls. Eh, in his earlier flicks he's already survived an asteroid accident, nocturnal monsters, a broiling sun, and a front-row seat for Dame Judi Dench as an Air Elemental named Aereon. On his scale, a killer space eel is just an excuse for sushi. Unfortunately, Diesel has nothing to act with but his fists—Riddick is saddled with goofy goggles and CGI night vision eyes. This time, to escape a planet, Riddick reveals his location to a network of bounty hunters and waits until he can kill off enough of them to steal their ship. Behold, the entirety of the plot. It's murderer versus murderers, with Riddick facing off against 11 bounty hunters who include a tremulous Christian (Nolan Gerard Funk), a badass lesbian (Katee Sackhoff), and a giant (wrestler Dave Bautista, who's like The Rock with a '90s goatee). The only reason to root for Riddick is that his name is on the ticket stub. But he's so dull and the hunters so weird that we're literally cheering for the movie to kill off its personality, one throat slash at a time. (R) Amy Nicholson. *Countywide*.

THE SPECTACULAR NOW In *The Spectacular Now*, two kids as specific as you are fall into slow, uncertain love, their hearts filling up with each other but not always synchronously. You know that person you made out with one weekend in high school, the one whose kiss made the world fall away—but then breezed by like you didn't exist during Monday's passing period? There's plenty of that here, but with one thing that really would have helped back then: a clear sense of psychology. The lovers here are not a natural match, and when apart they have to dare themselves to keep going—it would be simpler for Sutter Keely (Miles Teller), a Georgia small town's king of beers,

to party on without Aimee Finicky, a college-bound tutor-type whose wallflower-to-beauty transformation isn't ridiculous. Shailene Woodley's shy Aimee heads to school with bigger things to worry about than teen beauty—popular high school boys truly might be dumb enough not to notice her until the day she turns up fetchingly tanned and tank-topped at a campground kegger. She's a tender, moving creation, marvelously played. The movie is the boy's story, of course, as serious film romances

unfailingly are. Fortunately, this boy is a slothful charmer, as drunk on his own good humor as he is on the contents of his flask, the kind of movable fiesta a young Tom Hanks could have played. Unlike his '80s comedy forbears, this slob is treated as a dismaying riddle rather than a beacon of everyday honesty—his challenge isn't to triumph over the stock-type snobs, it's to shape all his likable traits into a self with something to offer the adult world. (R) Alan Scherstuhl. *Countywide*.

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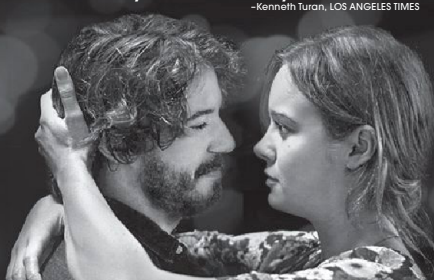
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Despair Knows No Color

An all-black *Death of a Salesman* still gets to the humanity of Arthur Miller's masterpiece

BY JOEL BEERS

In a preview last week of South Coast Repertory's production of *Death of a Salesman*, the *Los Angeles Times*' eminently thorough and cerebral Mike Boehm resurrected an incendiary quote from legendary African-American playwright August Wilson. "To mount an all-black production of *Death of a Salesman* or any other play conceived for white actors as an investigation of the human condition through the specifics of white culture is to deny us our own humanity, our own history and the need to make our own investigation from the cultural ground on which we stand as black Americans," Wilson said in a 1996 address at Princeton University.

Charlie Robinson, the African-American actor portraying Willy Loman in SCR's mostly all-African-American production, isn't convinced. "As much as I love August, it's the one thing I disagree with him about," he told Boehm. "I think you can grow by playing this role. If it's an African-American cast, the audience will say, 'We all have the same problems. We go through the same things.'"

Based on this rather astounding production courtesy of director Marc Masterson, both Wilson and Robinson are correct.

On one hand, it seems weird to see the Great American Tragedy of White Middle-Class America set in late 1940s Brooklyn featuring an African-American family. Though Jim Crow wasn't perched atop the Empire State Building, this was still *Plessy v. Ferguson*-era America, and a violent race riot in Harlem in 1943 and the furor over Jackie Robinson breaking in with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 are just two notable examples that NYC wasn't exactly colorblind. It's also weird hearing black characters punctuate their dialogue with words such as "pal" and "champ" and "slugger" (let alone a black kid being called Biff...).

On the other hand, Miller's writing is so universal, the strength of his examination of the broken spirit of Willy Loman so human, his questioning of the American Dream so trenchant and contemporary, it's pointless to get hung up over skin hue. White, black, Chinese or Laplander, people are people, and the power of this production resides in that simple, salient fact.

Robinson (recognized more for his work as court clerk Mac on the TV show

Night Court than his superlative career onstage) is a triumphant Willy Loman. Though shattered, self-delusional and apparently in the throes of early-onset dementia (he's only 63), Robinson's Loman bubbles with volcanic rage. That anger manifests in taking out his frustration and unhappiness by barking at his long-suffering wife (a splendid Kim Staunton) and his two sons, the prodigal

the play, but when he finally boils over, we feel the roiling tempest that has been massing beneath Biff's façade. In the often-overlooked role of Willy's youngest son, Hap, Larry Bates is also multilayered as the eternal peacemaker, looking up to both Biff and Willy, but just as trapped in the web of delusion that hangs above the household. The main supporting characters are also effective. But the fact that the

one genuine prick in this play, Willy's boss (Tyler Pierce), who unceremoniously fires him after 34 years with the company, is white does infuse the scene with a veneer of racial significance.

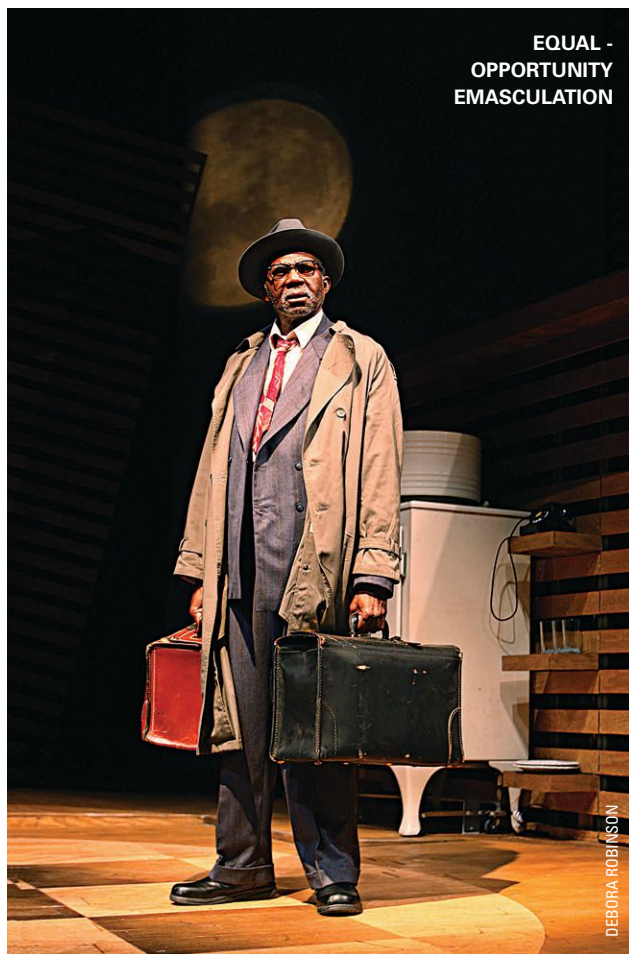
Masterson's production, while containing some interesting lighting effects (courtesy of Brian J. Lilienthal) and a subdued but fitting score (from composer Jim Ragland), comes close to minimalist. Michael B. Raiford's backdrop suggests the towering apartment buildings that have steadily enclosed the Loman household over the past 30 years, but other than a couple of beds and a vintage refrigerator, there are no permanent set pieces. This underscores that the majority of this play, which includes repeated flashbacks, often happening at the same time Willy is in the present, takes place in his muddled and frantic mind.

As with any decent *Salesman*, this production reveals Willy Loman as symbol, a victim of the American mantra that if you don't succeed in business, you've really achieved nothing, and once you're longer useful in that business, you're unceremoniously discarded. But what is remarkable about this production

is that Willy plays such an active role in his own destruction. This sacrificial lamb isn't led to slaughter by the oppressive force of American Capitalism as much as he follows the path formed by his own decisions. As his wife achingly implores her sons in the first act, attention must finally be paid to this man. Based on the virtuoso performance of Robinson—as well as those around him—the saddest part of this *Salesman* is that Willy Loman rarely paid attention to himself.

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

at South Coast Repertory's Segerstrom Stage, 655 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555; www.scr.org. Tues.-Wed., 7:30 p.m.; Thurs.-Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 2:30 & 8 p.m.; Sun., 2:30 & 7:30 p.m. Through Sept. 29. \$21-\$72.



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DEBORAH ROBINSON

Biff and the philandering Hap. Yet, in those moments when Willy reveals himself as so sad and overwhelmed and disenchanted at the sum of his life, he's also incredibly sympathetic. The brilliance of Miller's play lies in that, for the first time by a major playwright, a most common man was afflicted with the same sins of pride and ego as kings and princes and men of great status and authority. Robinson's ability to convey his small man's great tragedy and to still remain likeable and accessible is a marvel to watch.

As the vessel imbued by Willy to live the life he was too tentative to explore, Chris Butler (as the oldest son, Biff) delivers a deceptively powerful performance. The one character in this play who winds up truly understanding himself, Butler seems to casually tread water for most of

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Don't want to wash your hair anymore? Now you have a legitimate reason to excuse your dirty-hippie ways thanks to the "no-poo" movement, a horrible name for a great concept. Its premise is simple: All of the chemical crap in shampoo and conditioner (sulfates, parabens and other fun stuff) messes up our hair despite the promises of the shampoo cartel that every bottle guarantees shine, volume and the ability to get laid. So if you want to have your hair as beautiful as Rita Hayworth, go old-school: Ditch your bottle in favor of how our great-grandmas used to do it.

Shampoo as we know it only dates back to the late 19th century, derived from British imperialists who stole from their subcontinental subjects the word and the idea of washing your hair with products separate from what you used to scrub the rest of your body. The original shampoo was usually a combination of soap heavy in animal fats and essential oils, but it wasn't a wash-and-rinse kind of situation; women underwent a tiresome regime that took hours and required several rinses and combing sessions. The most they would wash their hair was about every two weeks. Everything changed in the 1930s, though, with the introduction of synthetics and mass production—and, as with anything given the ol' capitalism spin, it went downhill from there.



No-poo seeks to go back to the garden, and it works. I have a mass of thin blond hair that just hangs without the help of volumizers and mousses—or so I thought. About a year ago, I tried the no-poo philosophy. The most hardcore way to go is substituting baking soda for shampoo and apple cider vinegar for conditioner. You dilute both ingredients with water in a 1:1 ratio (1 tablespoon per cup of filtered water), then use as needed. Sure, your hair will be greasy for the first couple of weeks, but everything balances out after your scalp detoxes. You'll have to wash your hair less, and it becomes more manageable.

Mine had never before been so full and in need of zero upkeep. And now, the full disclosure: I've since switched to completely organic shampoo instead of making my own, just for convenience and 'cause coconut smells good and I'm American and have to buy something....

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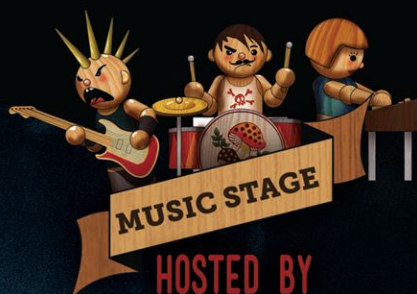
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A Brother Leaves the Bar

Roy Wood Jr. of TBS' *Sullivan & Son* rocks the khaki

BY ALI LERMAN

Just off a successful tour with his co-stars from TBS' hit show *Sullivan & Son*, Roy Wood Jr. rolls out again on a solo tour. We drilled him about his alcohol consumption, got the scoop on his show and cast mates, and gave him a little shit about his TV wardrobe.

OC WEEKLY: *I heard you just got back into*

town. Where were you?

ROY WOOD JR.: I had gone over to Thailand for a couple of days, and then to Hawaii with the guys from *Sullivan & Son*. We just concluded our summer tour in Hawaii, so that was pretty cool. Hawaii is a very different place, to say the least. How so?

Hawaii is just too nice, and I know that sounds weird. But I grew up in a high-crime neighborhood in Birmingham, and I've lived in LA for the past seven years, so you just get used to a certain level of asshole; you become comfortable with it. But in Hawaii, everyone is so nice, so you stop trusting people. Hawaii just needs a town asshole, some jerk to ride around and keep it balanced. Just riding up and down the street, screaming expletives like the ice cream man.

Can you imagine? Some guy riding around, doing random shankings just because? Yeah, something to keep people's heads on swivel! No one locks doors in Maui, and I'm in a fortress! Maybe I'm just a paranoid idiot who needs to relax a little bit. *You're not; it is really nice over there.*

When do you start taping the show again? We probably won't start until February of next year. I'm excited to break away from those idiots for a little bit and work on my own endeavors. [Laughs.] I love the tour, but when you spend three months on set and another two on the road with the same four dudes, you kind of want to get away for a minute.

You guys are together so much. There must be some quirks that start driving you all crazy.

I think we all have something that annoys the other in a brotherly type of way. I'm always late to the lobby for hotel pick up, which does nothing to help the stereotype of black people. Hey, sometimes I'm just late! I don't know what it is! The most embarrassed I've ever been was when I missed a Saturday 8 p.m. flight. Like, how do you miss a Saturday 8 p.m. flight in LA? There's not even any traffic at that point. I had no excuse. I just told them, "It's because I'm black. It is what it is." The only guy I sometimes beef with on the show is Owen Benjamin. We'll sometimes hit a bar after the show, and he has the ability to attract the funnest people and the weirdest people in the room. And it's just his vibe; it's nothing he's doing deliberately. Owen will do high-fives and a couple of shots, and the next thing you know, he's gone and I'm left talking to some dude telling me how he used to hunt sheep. First of all, you can't hunt sheep, sir. You can herd sheep or buy sheep. And he was saying it all braggadocio, like he was a buck hunter!

That's insane. I'm not busting your balls, but you rock the fuck out of khaki pants and a polo shirt on the show. I assume you're styling onstage, though, right? Exactly! I have a new standup CD coming out this fall, tentatively titled "Things I Think When I Drink," but most of the stuff I do is new and separate from that. My hour is a little more intense as far as the subject matter and how I approach edgier things. Because when you only have 20 minutes as I do when I'm with the *Sullivan & Son* tour, it's not a lot of time to build an act the way you want to. When you're trying to build up something and take the audience on an emotional journey... you don't have a lot of time for that in 20 minutes. With an hour, I'll be weaving it all together.

For more info on Roy Wood Jr., check out his website, www.RoyWoodJr.com, and follow him on Twitter: @RoyWoodJr.



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Tearin' the Roof Off

FIDLAR want to turn the Observatory into one big house party
BY DANIEL KOHN

When FIDLAR hit the Observatory stage for Burgerama in March, they weren't quite sure what to expect. They'd played some of their best shows at that venue, but as part of such a deep lineup, the band weren't sure how many fans were there for them. By the time the foursome finished a whirlwind 40-minute set, the answer was quite clear: A shit ton.

Swirling mosh pits and crowd-surfing youths aside, the Los Angeles-based quartet have made in-roads not only with the notoriously fickle, insular Orange County punk community, but internationally as well. For the better part of 18 months, FIDLAR have been touring almost non-stop throughout Europe and the States with a live show that's known for its electric energy and wild antics. (For example, singer Zac Carper has been known to put either a friend's or band mate's phone number on his amp, then telling fans it's Justin Bieber's direct line.) Formed in 2009, FIDLAR (an acronym for "Fuck It Dog, Life's A Risk") honed their craft by playing several noted punk venues and DIY art spaces in LA, but their legendary house-party sets are what helped them catch on with the younger punk crowd. They would play almost any party anywhere, including in Fullerton, which they describe as an "insane" romp that got gloriously out of hand. Combining their

balls-to-the-wall brand of surf punk meets garage rock with rowdy crowds, the local police departments were often unwelcome guests.

"I think a kid who plays with Underground Road to Candy Land jumped off a roof into the crowd," Carper recalls.

But that's hardly the craziest thing to have happened. "We were playing in front of a trailer, and a girl was leaning over the roof of an RV and peed off it while we were playing," he says. "It's always involving a roof with that kind of stuff."

Although they're proud Angelenos, FIDLAR love playing in OC, especially the Observatory and its Constellation Room.

"The Observatory crowd is hard to beat," says bassist Brandon Schwartzel. "There are a lot of kids who are really into [our] kind of music."

And with good reason. FIDLAR released their self-titled debut earlier this year via Mom + Pop for nearly every format—except cassette, for which the band sought local indie Burger Records to produce 500 limited-edition tapes. "I actually emailed Sean [Bohrman] at Burger and asked him if he wanted to put out the tape of the record, and he was down to do it," guitarist/vocalist Elvis Kuehn explains. "They knew who we were and had seen us play. Plus, they're really nice dudes."

"We've all been fans of the label," drummer Max Kuehn adds. "They put out

a lot of cool bands we like."

Although the guys haven't had the time to produce an album's worth of new material because of their busy tour schedule, FIDLAR just released a split 7-inch single with their friends the Orwells through Mom + Pop and Burger. Titled "Awkward," the single is similar to songs such as "Cheap Beer" and "Max Can't Surf." Carper's lyrics often touch on the daily life of someone in his or her mid-20s, which is one of the band's most appealing traits.

FIDLAR landed on the top of many Best New Bands lists in 2012, and opening for the Hives and Black Lips gave the guys a new perspective about staying disciplined on the road. (For them, that means no skateboarding while on tour.) But there's one thing they won't give up, at least not yet: playing the DIY art spaces where they got their start.

"It's become a little too hard to do now," Max says. "We still like to do them, and they're fun, but [those shows are] cramped and tough to play."

Not a bad problem to have.

FIDLAR

perform with the Orwells and Meat Market at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com. Thurs., Sept. 19. Call for show time. \$13. All ages. For more info on FIDLAR, visit FIDLAR.tumblr.com.

On the Road, Part 2

People have this idea that touring is all fun and no work, that bands just drink a lot and party every night! People think we musicians are out here, watching great bands play with us, night after night. That we have no responsibilities, such as doing dishes, laundry, weed whacking, etc. That it's just a whirlwind adventure of meeting beautiful, creative, crazy people! That you end up in the coolest bars with total strangers, swapping punk-rock stories, and then you become friends for life.

Well, they're right! That is exactly why I do this. You couldn't ask for a better life.

Except, we do work, and we have to still wash our clothes. Our tour has three great crew people, which makes it easier. The shows are physically demanding, and I do get exhausted at times from sound checks and stairs and playing and talking and stairs and icky food and no sleep. Plus, dragging a suitcase and backpack and purse and coat around, in and out of the van, sometimes into nice hotels, sometimes into super-crappy (or medium-crappy) hotels. And the bills don't go away while I'm gone.

Truly, this is a fun tour. The shows and audiences are good, with no mishaps, dust-ups, screw-ups or boo-boos. One night, I had to apologize to some concert-goers in the front row. They had their fingers in their ears the whole time we played, and they weren't even on Billy Zoom's side of the stage! It is always nice to play to people who have never heard X. Even if they are hearing us somewhat painfully.

Festivals are great fun, too. You get to see and sometimes hang out with bands you'd never otherwise share a bill with.

I think about the ills of Earth (and possible solutions and escape plans) almost nonstop, so this tour is a break from that. But it's hyper-real, too. Onstage, if you can get lost in the music and the energy, it can be mighty profound. And it totally makes up for the no health insurance, no benefits, no pension, no security, barely eeking by—that part of being in a band.

I'm really grateful that after 35 years, people (young, old, new and veteran fans) still like what X and Blondie do, that they love and respect our punk-rock ways!

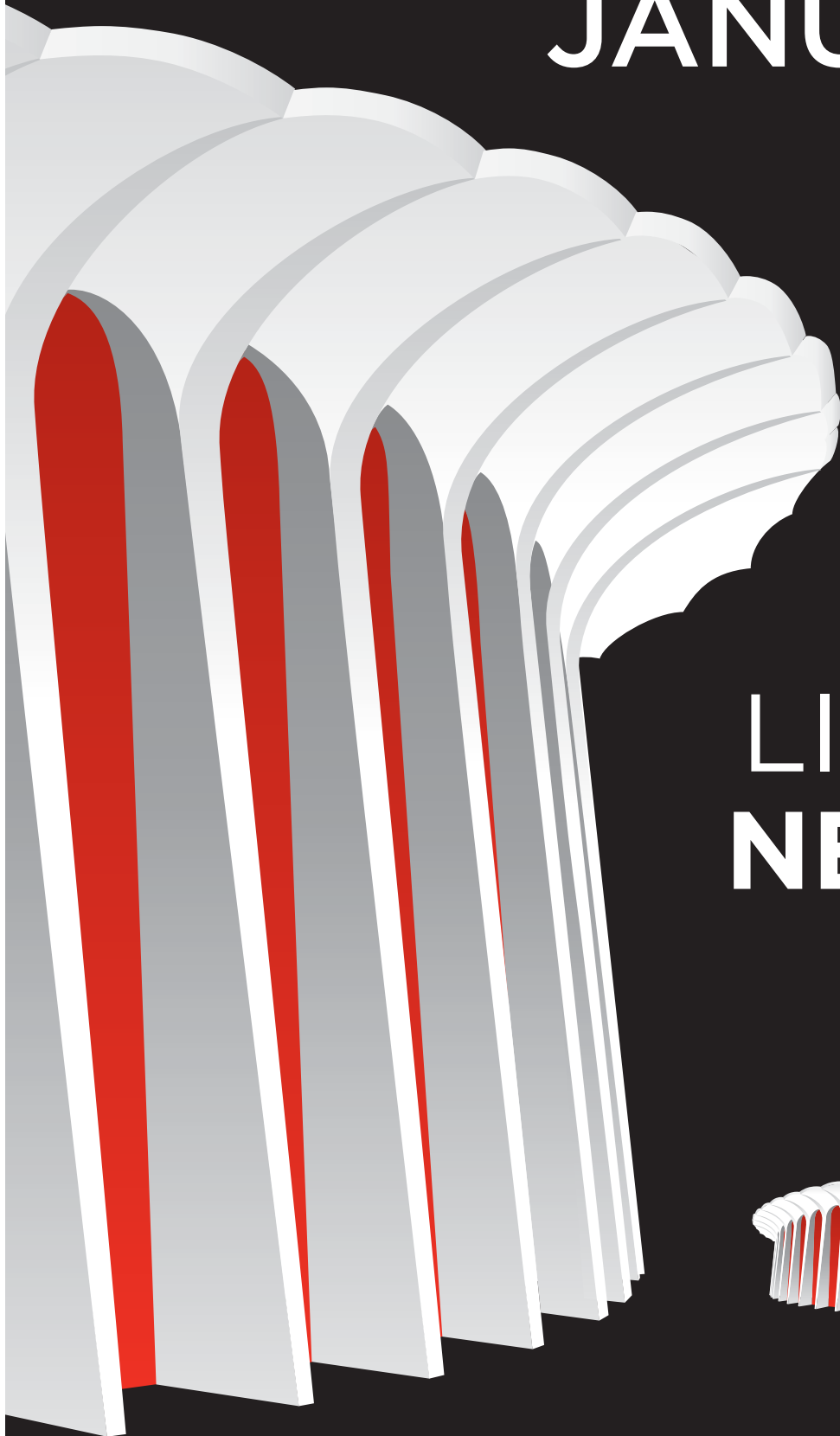
Exene Cervenka is a writer, visual artist and punk-rock pioneer, as the lead singer for X, the Knitters and Original Sinners. Contact her via askexene@ocweekly.com.

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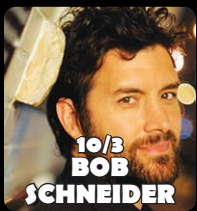
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THE GUY ON THE
LEFT ACTUALLY
LOOKS LIKE THAT

TODD WEAVER

Are Islands Forever?

The band's new album incites candid feelings about their future

BY HEIDI DARBY

Even though Islands embrace the mantra "Islands are forever," front man Nick Thorburn admits there's a sense of urgency surrounding their recent album, *Ski Mask*. Despite the band's wide critical acclaim and recent commercial attention, they are at a crossroads with gaining a broader platform. Thorburn hopes that changes with the new EP. His lyrics drive a sound that leans more toward brain candy than indie rock, pirouetting in and out of surf, synth-pop and art rock.

The dizzying list of musical comparisons rouse a sense of pride in the lead singer; though he says they aren't necessarily creating something that's never been done before, he's certain their music builds on originality. "I'm not trying to make oldies music or noise or experimental music. I think that's a really contrived dead end," he says. "Islands have never tried to be genre-specific. We don't make it easy on ourselves. But at the end of the day, when I'm looking back on my work, I'd much rather be uncompromised vs. chasing a dollar."

If the album art is any indicator, conformist dollars were the last thing on the front man's agenda. Conceptualized by Thorburn, it depicts a disturbing yet visually engaging still from the 1988 B-film *Ozone: Attack of the Red Neck Mutants*. The photo of a mutated head is a wild first impression for the collection of songs. Considering Thorburn's lauded role in the British Columbian act the Unicorns, as well as a side project featuring Michael Cera on bass, it's no surprise he likes to keep things interesting.

Just less than two years after the release of their previous effort, *A Sleep and a Forgetting*, Islands put out a new album on Sept. 17. The quick turnaround

between the two gave way to some of the darkest subject matter in the group's catalog. "Becoming the Gunship" offers a lush croon and a resonating chorus, and "Death Drive" toys with the Freudian theory of inevitable self-destruction. Sound deep? *Ski Mask* plunges further into the waters of Thorburn's musical psyche with the pivotal track "Of Corpse," on which the Canadian-born musician reaches a metaphorical turning point that echoes his entire attitude for the project.

"Initially, I was the victim, being robbed by someone in a ski mask wearing a pretty dress," he recalls. "But I decided to change the perspective of the narrator and become the assailant as opposed to the victim. I've been a victim for the past four albums, and now I've decided to become the criminal."

Aggressive language and curiously uplifting music counteract to reveal an all-encompassing sound that's both catchy and haunting. Thorburn's surge of empowerment arguably fuels his candidness regarding his state of mind. "I feel like I'm at a point where I don't think I can necessarily keep making music in a vacuum; I need the give and take," he says. "I'm working in the public, and I'm working with the listener. It's a mutual arrangement; I need the symbiosis. I feel like we are putting these songs out with a level of risk. There's something to lose. . . . I'm trying to make sure the music we make gets a fair shake."

ISLANDS

perform at the Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com. Wed., 9 p.m. \$12. All ages.

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Best Buds

Before they ever played a note together, Drinking Flowers had a bond—one fertilized by a shitty job.

"We all worked at a fuckin' restaurant that we hated," says guitarist/lead vocalist Alex Galindo. "We wanted to make some loud music because we were disgruntled."

The fondue joint in Mission Viejo where Galindo met the four other people in his band has since closed. But as long as Drinking Flowers—a psych-grunge outfit of twentysomething Costa Mesa natives—keep making music together, tales of the "cheesy, dumb, fake-nice restaurant" live on in their banter.

Lately, they are relying less on 9-to-5 jobs as they begin to make headway in LA's DIY psych-rock scene, which is brimming with gigs for the OC-born scrappers. Tapping from a mutual love of fuzz bands such as the Black Angels (from Austin, Texas) and SoCal faves the Warlocks and the Growlers, Drinking Flowers spun out their own take on the genre with a debut EP, released this summer on Lolipop Records, an Echo Park label headed by Laguna Beach transplant Wyatt Blair (Mr. Elevator and the Brain Hotel, Feeding People).

Titled *Sanity Restored In 1972*, it is a reference to Texas psychedelic forerunners 13th Floor Elevators, "specifically when the singer Roky Erickson got arrested in the late-'60s for smoking reefer and was thrown into a mental ward," Galindo explains. "He escaped a couple of times, but after awhile, he was declared 'sane' in 1972."

The sound is what you'd expect given the band's stated influences: gauzy guitar

awash in reverb and fuzz, lots of effects on the vocals—and the vibe can sound a little pissed off at times. It's something that stems from Galindo's perpetual annoyance with his environs. "We're an angry band because that hip nihilism shit is in vogue," he says. "You know, just, like, being, like, ironic and having Internet humor and not caring about anything else."

Six months ago, Galindo moved to LA with his girlfriend, bassist Jade Christensen; guitarist Nick Crays now lives nearby, too. The move was a response to the band getting more serious. "The amount of people going out for shows on a regular basis is drastically different," Galindo says about the LA scene. "I mean, there are a lot of great bands and people who go out to shows in Orange County, but it's a lot harder to get yourself out there."

He's stoked about how the band have progressed in the two years since they've begun writing music together. "When we were gigging around Santa Ana and Costa Mesa a few years ago, we were playing songs that were good but very exposed," Galindo says. "Maybe I'm overanalyzing, but I think our approach now to music is much more open-ended and much more directionless—it's more of a feeling and less of a sound. I think we're actually expressing it in some of our newer material."

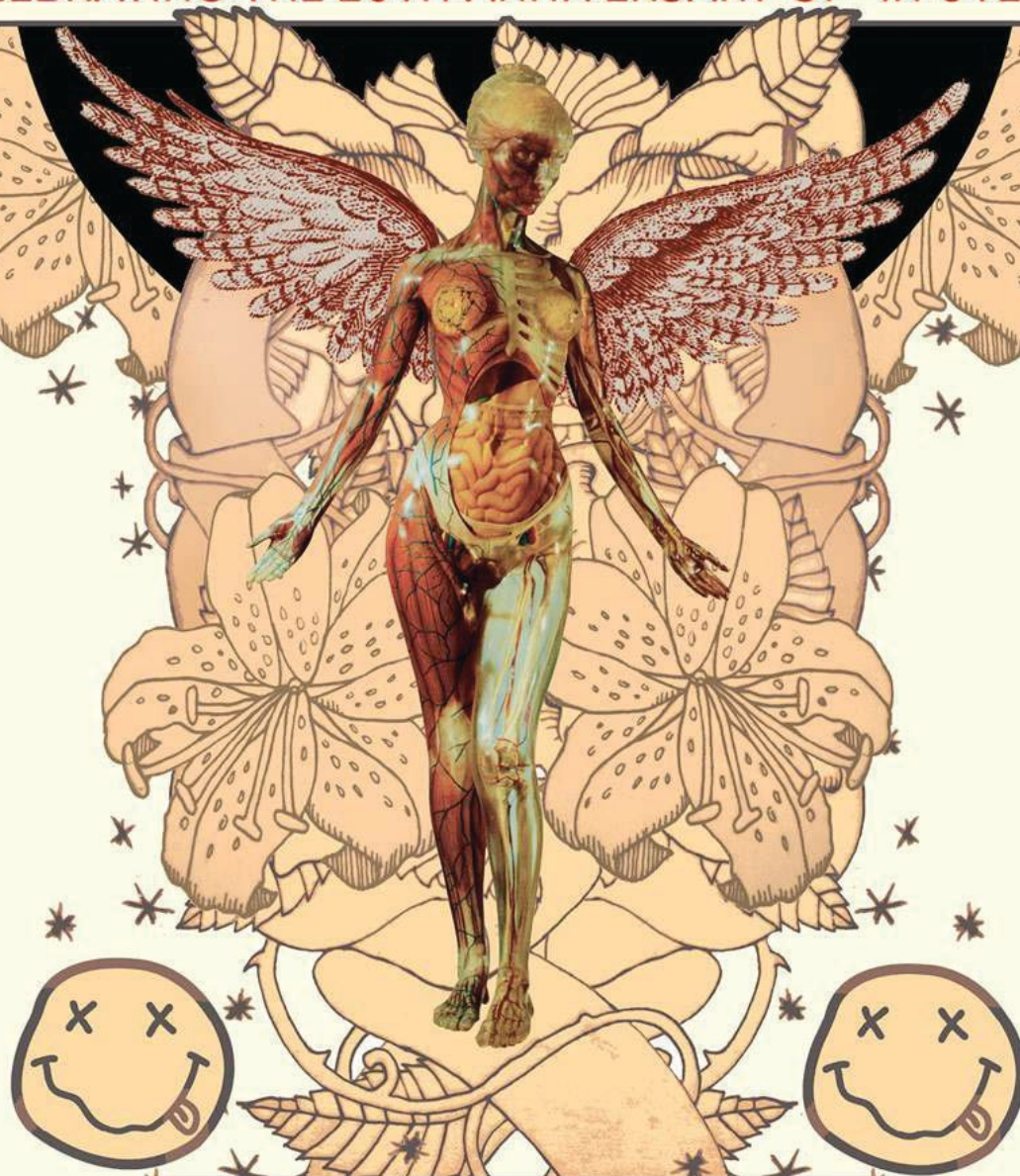
Drinking Flowers are currently in the midst of writing their follow-up, which they expect out sometime this winter. The plan is to release it on cassette instead of vinyl. "It's an unconscious yearning for authenticity, simplicity and innocent times," Galindo says, "before the world became overexposed and flattened into pixels."

For more info on Drinking Flowers and to download *Sanity Restored In 1972*, visit www.facebook.com/DrinkingFlowers.

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8 WORST EMO BANDS

BY LUCAS CHEMOTTI

8 LA DISPUTE

Wildlife was good, but have you ever seen Jordan Dreyer perform “Such Small Hands” live? I didn’t think anybody that emotional could move around so much. They are the most overly dramatic and theatrical band I’ve ever seen. I like my emo told from a first-person perspective, not novels with overwrought imagery that gets nauseating by the third song.



7 FALL OUT BOY

Once upon a time in middle school, I thoroughly enjoyed what Pete Wentz and Patrick Stump were writing. Back when “Sugar We’re Going Down” was the best song played on MTV, every track off *Take This to Your Grave* was great, and doing a Warped Tour wasn’t such a death blow to an underground emo band’s credibility. It kills me to include this band here, but let’s face it, Fall Out Boy are a textbook example of an emo sellout.

6 SAVES THE DAY

The only ’90s emo band on the list, Saves the Day have definitely overstayed their welcome. Though *Being Cool* was a great album and taking the name from emo legend Jawbreaker was a good move, going through 20 different people while only keeping Chris Conley as a standing member is a bit much. Why put out eight albums when the first three said everything that could be said? There is a reason the best emo bands of the ’90s broke up in their prime.



5 MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

They were able to cross their early dark aesthetic over to a more conceptual pop career, and for that I salute My Chemical Romance. But after their recent break-up, any of the members’ future projects will likely stay in the shadow of what once was. Front man Gerard Way was once quoted as saying emo was bullshit and that the band were far from it. But then again, there is nothing really more emo than hating the term used to describe the genre.

4 SIMPLE PLAN

Definitely the cheesiest band on this list, Simple Plan were not for high-school listeners, but rather for middle-schoolers. The gems on the poorly titled album *No Pads, No Helmets... Just Balls* were actually popular at the time, even though the whole thing was basically a rip-off of Blink-182’s *Take Off Your Pants and Jacket*.

3 FROM FIRST TO LAST

Skrillex’s first introduction to the music industry wasn’t through electronic music, but rather another terrible outlet. Even the band’s biggest fans can’t name one song From First to Last released.

2 AIDEN

Probably the closest emo-lovers have to the Misfits, Aiden are a theatrical, over-the-top, horror-influenced band that never really found an audience beyond fans of My Chemical Romance or Avenged Sevenfold. Named after a character in *The Ring*, the band take the same trajectory as the movie, starting with a terrible concept and ending up closer to *Scary Movie 3*, a complete joke.

1 HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS

“Cut my wrists and black my eyes” is the epitome of what’s wrong with emo. Self-harm for the sake of being sad, but flaunting it in a way that boasts about a serious issue. What were Hawthorne Heights thinking?

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THE GUY ON THE LEFT
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Return of the Natives

Local Natives take a big step forward
BY JOSH HERWITT

When Taylor Rice, Kelcey Ayer, Ryan Hahn and Matt Frazier first moved into a Silver Lake house to record Local Natives' debut album, *Gorilla Manor*, the idea they could one day be prepping for a headlining show at the Greek Theatre just a few miles up the road felt about as likely as winning the lottery.

"I don't think any of us expected to play there," Hahn admits. "It's definitely one of those places that just seemed out of reach."

Five years and two albums since they relocated to LA from their native Mission Viejo, Local Natives walked onto the stage of the historic Hollywood amphitheater and unleashed their salvo of airtight vocal harmonies along with the saccharine concoction of layered guitar, polyrhythms and foot stomping that made them famous. With the release of their well-received 2013 sophomore effort, *Hummingbird*, at their back, the Sept. 13 homecoming show was certainly in order.

"It's definitely an incredible kind of milestone for us," Hahn says.

By this point in their career, Local Natives aren't new to large crowds. The quartet—now touring with bassist Nik Ewing—has hit just about every big U.S. festival this year, including Coachella, Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza. Along the way, they've opened for such indie giants as Arcade Fire and the National, the latter of which led to an opportunity to work with Aaron Dessner on *Hummingbird*.

"We're all pretty proud of the amount of work we've put into this [record]," says Hahn, who maneuvers between guitar, keyboards and mandolin while sharing vocal duties with Rice (guitar/bass) and Ayer (keyboards/guitar/percussion). (Drummer Frazier is the only full-time member who doesn't sing.)

The success Local Natives have garnered, however, hasn't come without heartache. A little more than a year after

releasing *Gorilla Manor*, the band chose to part ways with bassist Andy Hamm. A few months later, more turmoil surfaced when Ayer's mother abruptly passed away.

"All these things were going incredibly well on one hand, but there were also a lot of heavier things we were going through," Hahn explains. "I think we had to navigate that emotionally."

Hummingbird offered Local Natives a way to channel those emotions and, at the same time, take an entirely new approach to their songwriting process.

"I think it would have been dishonest for us to try to write anything other than what we were going through," Hahn continues. "For us, the record feels very cathartic."

Yet, as much as Local Natives didn't want to repeat themselves sonically, learning how to translate *Hummingbird* into something that could be played live for the masses created its own complications. When they met with Dessner in his Brooklyn studio last year to begin recording, "all we could really do is write a record that we were proud of," Hahn says. "We wanted to feel like we were digging deeper and expanding ourselves—trying new things musically, but also being more direct and personal."

But when it came time to tour, the close-knit band were left trying to re-create much of the 11-track LP from scratch. "Those are the most volatile discussions we have, where the ugliest fights break out," Hahn says. "When you play a song live, it's a different experience."

Whatever creative differences there have been, none has comprised the friendship that Rice, Ayer and Hahn have shared since they met at Tesoro High School more than a decade ago. As with their harmonies, their chemistry has only improved with time.

"We've definitely grown as musicians, and I think subtlety has become a powerful thing," Hahn says. "We're feeling more comfortable letting the music speak."

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I Wish They All Could Be Like Beach Girls

Why bikini bars are one of the best places for chicks to drink—especially at this Westminster classic

It's Monday night, football's on, and I'm the only woman not working (and fully dressed) at Beach Girls in Westminster. No music is playing, just football noise and light chatter from about 10 male customers. A pretty black girl in a yellow string bikini ("Brittani," spelled with hearts above the I's) served us. I order a Shock Top from one of the 13 beers on tap with the full intention of easing into the harder stuff.

Without getting too cerebral here—this is a dive-bar review, after all—the interesting thing about bikini bars is it turns the female social structure upside-down. Guys can probably vouch for this: How many times have you been with a gal at a bar and heard her talk about what a bitch (or an even more vulgar synonym) the female bartender was? More than you've heard her complain about the male bartender, no doubt. Women hate women as cats hate baths, sure, but bikini bars have a different set of rules. The girls in lingerie behind the bar treat gals better because they're less likely to manhandle them, and as a minority in the room, ladies connect with female drinkers quicker. Hell, they may even tip them better here than at a bar with a higher male-female ratio.

But enough sociology. This is a bar that has "girls" in its name, so naturally, it's a dudes' bar. Beach Girls has liquor—sweet, sweet liquor—and four blue pool tables with Bud Light lamps hanging above. Men come here to watch their presumed two favorite things: sports and scantily clad women in the dark.

Brittani asked if I wanted another beer; I told her to serve me her favorite drink to make. Dat Ass was placed in front of me; it's a fruity cocktail made with watermelon and mango vodka, so refreshing it made me wish I was drinking it at 1 p.m. during our recent heatwave. Dat Ass, indeed. Brittani has a belly-button piercing and a lipstick mark tattooed on her ass, which is the best possible segue for the following: lipstick-stained kisses of all colors adorn the door of the handicapped ladies' room wall, along with "Taylor" written in lipstick (wasn't me, I swear!).

It's a dude-friendly place, for sure; the few times I've stopped in, men eager to give bartenders a real cozy hug filled the room, their tongues nearly hitting the floor. Thank God for the bouncers—and not just because they save the gals from lechers. The first time I went to Beach Girls, it was one of those days—few things bring a gal into a bikini bar at 1 in the afternoon, but life giving you a *Reservoir Dogs*-style



HIGHLIGHT OF THE NIGHT:

Drunkenly explaining to anyone within earshot the merits of combative TV host Wally George because I've been researching him nonstop for a cover story. Yikes, the job is getting to me!

FAVORITE FLAIR:

The far wall of the ladies' room is beautifully decorated with a giant gypsy woman.

beating is one of them. I walked in, marched directly to the bikini babe behind the bar and said, "Fuck this; pour me a stiff one."

The only other person there was the bodyguard, Lawrence, cracking jokes. He questioned me in a friendly manner, since I was obviously a queer sight for them: a young woman not dropping off an application.

I explained I was having one of my worst days of recent memory. I explained my accomplishment of not drinking for a spell (a true accomplishment, given I write this column), and then confessed I was going to my favorite bar down the road as soon as some bullshit errand was wrapped up.

"Well, hell," Lawrence enthusiastically replied, "if you're breaking the seal, I'll be there tonight to celebrate after I get off!"

And you know what, ladies and germs? The blue-shirted bouncer was true to his word. He showed up at my favorite dive, and the two of us partied until closing. Cheers to Lawrence!

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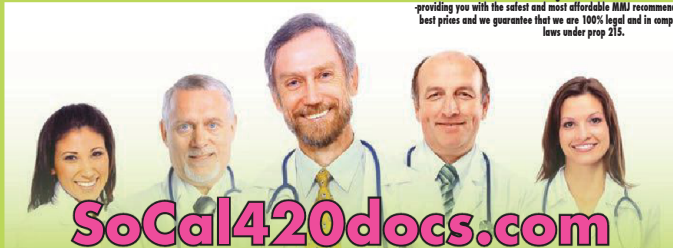
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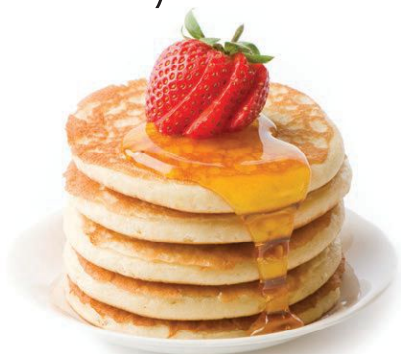
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▼ Free Will Astrology

By Rob Breznys

ARIES (March 21-April 19): "If Taylor Swift is going to have six breakups a year," observed comedian Bill Maher, "she needs to write a new song entitled 'Maybe It's Me.'" He was referring to Swift's habit of using her romantic misadventures to stimulate her lyric-writing creativity. With that as your prompt, Aries, I'll ask you to do some soul-searching about your own intimacy issues. How have you contributed to the problems you've had in getting the love and care you want? What unconscious behavior or conditioned responses have undermined your romantic satisfaction, and what could you do to transform them? The next eight weeks will be prime time to revolutionize your approach to relationships.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Philosopher Alan Watts used to talk about how the whole world is wiggling all the time. Clouds, trees, sky, water, human beings: Everything's constantly shimmying and jigging and wagging. One of our problems, Watts said, is that we're "always trying to straighten things out." We feel nagging urges to deny or cover up or eliminate the wiggling. "Be orderly," we command reality. "Be neat and composed and predictable." But reality never obeys. It's forever doing what it does best: flickering and fluctuating and flowing. In accordance with astrological omens, Taurus, I encourage you to rebel against any natural tendencies you might have to fight the eternal wiggle. Instead, celebrate it. Rejoice in it. Align yourself with it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Author Elaine Scarry defines "the basic impulse underlying education" as follows: the "willingness to continually revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty." Consider making this your modus operandi in the coming weeks, Gemini. Always be on the lookout for signs that beauty is near. Do research to find out where beauty might be hiding and where beauty is ripening. Learn all you can about what kinds of conditions attract beauty, and then create those conditions. Finally, hang around people who are often surrounded by beauty. This approach will be an excellent way to further your education.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): "Life is either always a tight-rope or a feather bed. Give me the tight-rope." So declared writer Edith Wharton. But she was an Aquarius, and more temperamentally suited to the tight-rope. Many of you Cancerians, on the other hand, prefer to emphasize the feather-bed mode. I suspect that in the next nine months, however, you will be willing and even eager to spend more time on the tight-rope than is customary for you. To get primed for the excitement, I suggest you revel in some intense feather-bed action in the coming weeks. Charge up your internal batteries with an extra-special deluxe regimen of sweet self-care.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Half of a truth is better than no truth at all, right? Wrong! If you latch on to the partially accurate story, you may stop looking for the rest of the story. And then you're liable to make a premature decision based on insufficient data. The better alternative is to reject the partially accurate story and be willing to wait around in the dark until the complete revelation comes. That may be uncomfortable for a while. But when the full truth finally straggles in, you will be very glad you didn't jump to unripe conclusions.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): A Chinese entrepreneur named Nin Nan dreamed up a unique way to generate capital: He sold dead mosquitoes online for a dollar apiece, advertising them as useful for scientific research and decoration. Within two days, he received 10,000 orders. Let's make him your patron saint and role model for the next few weeks, Virgo. May he inspire you to come up with novel ways to stimulate your cash flow. The planetary omens suggest that

your originality is more likely than usual to generate concrete rewards.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "The most important thing is to find out what the most important thing is," wrote Shunryu Suzuki in his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. That's your assignment for the next three weeks. Do whatever it takes to find out beyond any doubt what the most important thing is. Meditate naked an hour a day. Go on long walks in the wildest places you know. Convene intense conversations about yourself with the people who know you best. Create and sign a contract with yourself in which you vow to identify the experience you want more than any other experience on earth. No waffling allowed, Libra. What is the single most important thing?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Sometime in the next nine months you may feel moved to embark on an adventure that will transform the way you understand reality. Maybe you will choose to make a pilgrimage to a sacred sanctuary or wander further away from your familiar comforts than you ever have before. Right now is an excellent time to brainstorm about the possibilities. If you don't feel ready to actually begin your quest, at least formulate a master plan for the magic moment when you will be ripe.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): In the indigenous culture of Hawaii, "mana" refers to a spiritual power that may abide in people, objects, and natural locations. You can acquire more of it by acting with integrity and excellence, but you might lose some of it if your actions are careless or unfocused. For instance, a healer who does a mediocre job of curing her patients could lose the mana that made her a healer in the first place. I believe that similar principles hold true for non-Hawaiians. All of us have an ever-shifting relationship with the primal life force. What's the current state of your own personal supply, Sagittarius? It's time to make sure you're taking full advantage of the mana you have been blessed with. Your motto: "Use it or lose it."

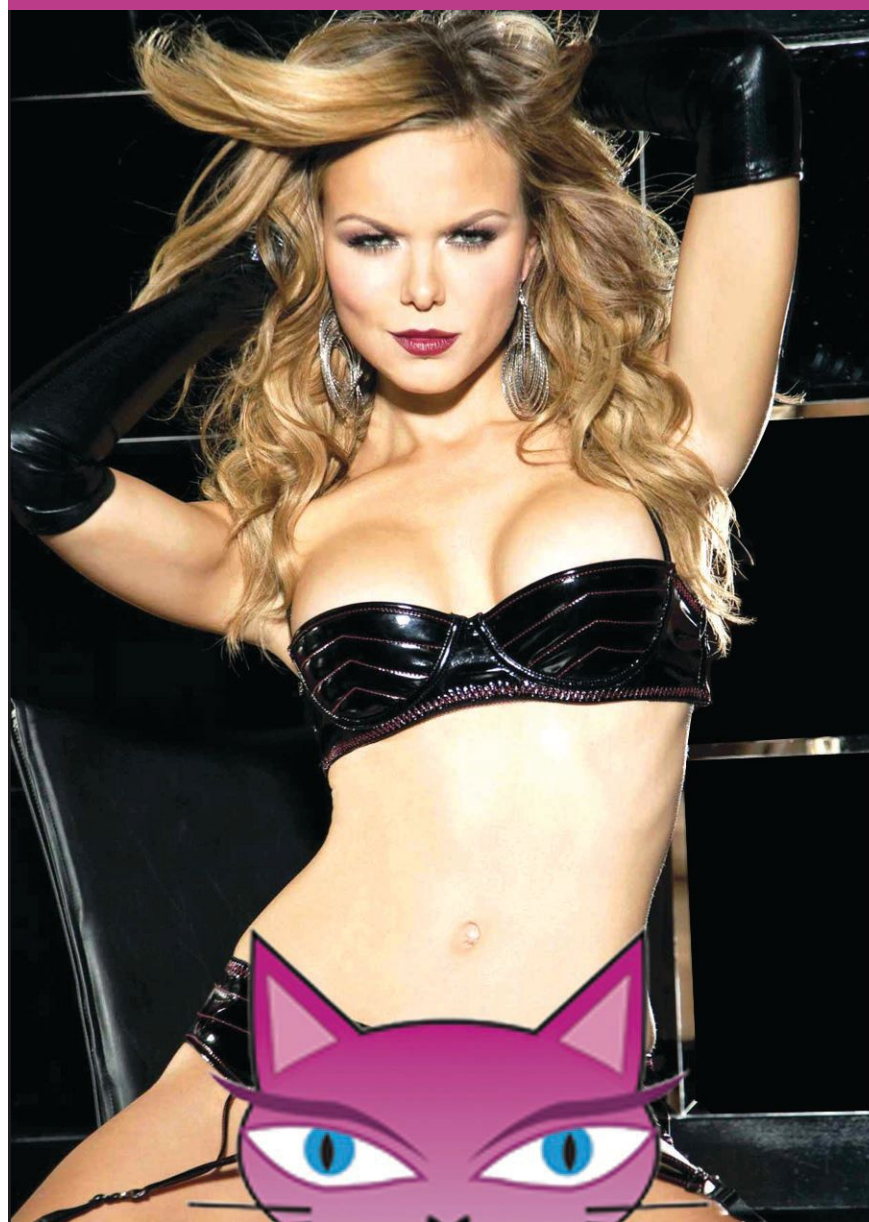
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Have you been getting enough? I doubt it. I think you should sneak a peek into the hiding place where your insatiable cravings are stored. If you're brave enough, also take a look at your impossible demands and your unruly obsessions and your suppressed miracles. Please note: I'm not suggesting that you immediately unleash them all; I don't mean you should impulsively instigate an adventure that could possibly quench your ravenous yearnings. But I do believe you will benefit from becoming better acquainted with them. You could develop a more honest relationship, which would ultimately make them more trustworthy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't tape your thumbs to your hands and stalk around pretending to be a dinosaur. Don't poke three holes in a large plastic garbage bag and wear it as a tunic while imagining that you are a feudal serf in a post-apocalyptic, sci-fi dystopia. Don't use a felt-tip marker to draw corporate logos on your face to show everyone what brands of consumer goods you love. To be clear: I would love you to be extravagantly creative. I hope you will use your imagination in novel ways as you have fun playing with experimental scenarios. But please exercise a modicum of discernment as you wander way outside the box. Be at least 20 percent practical.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): "Take a lover who looks at you like maybe you are magic," says the poet Marty McConnell. That's good advice, Pisces -- not just in regards to your intimate relationships, but about all your other alliances, too. If you're seeking a friend or consultant or business partner or jogging companion or new pet, show a preference for those creatures who look at you like maybe you are magic. You always need to be appreciated for the sweet mystery and catalytic mojo you bring to your partnerships, but you especially need that acknowledgment now.

Homework: Unleash an outrageous boast about how you're going to pull off a certain feat that you've previously lacked the chutzpah to attempt. Testify at Freewillastrology.com.

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NOTICE IS GIVEN that the undersigned intends to sell the personal property described below to enforce a lien imposed on said property pursuant to Sections 21700-21716 of the Business & Professions Code, Section 2328 of the UCC, Section 535 of the Penal Code and provisions of the Civil Code.

The undersigned will sell at public sale by competitive bidding on the 23rd of September, 2013 at 11:00AM on the premises where said property has been consigned for auction at Spectrum Wine Auctions, 1063 McGraw Ave Ste 100, Irvine, CA, County of Orange, State of California, the following:

Publish Dates: September 4, 2013 and September 11, 2013
Auctioneer's Name: Spectrum Wine Auctions Bond # 7609315
Auctioneer's Telephone # (949) 748-4845

NAME ON ACCOUNT
Spyglass Properties

The storage space consists of 7 bottles of wine, a combination of White, Marlot, and Chardonnay.

Purchases must be paid for at the time of purchase in cash only. All purchased items are sold as is, where is, and must be removed at the time of sale. Sale is subject to cancellation in the event of settlement between owner and obligated party.

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Orangewood Children's Foundation

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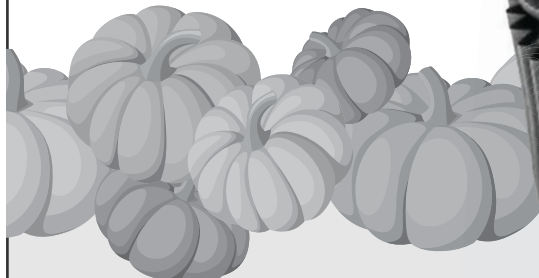
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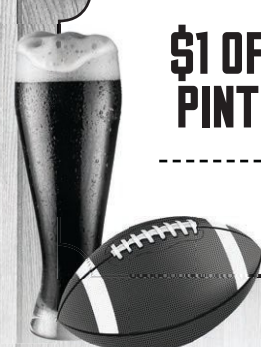
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\$3 WELL WEDNESDAYS
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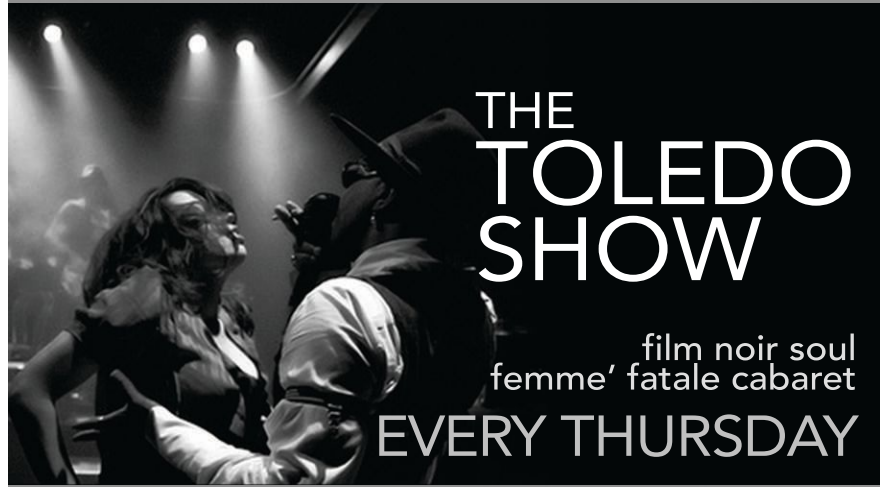


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